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PREFACE.

THIS work is designed to assist the Minister of the Gospel in his study. It is hoped that it will be of use as serving to suggest subjects for discourse, and occasionally, perhaps, supplying the backbone of a sermon. Beyond this, the book will disappoint; it is not calculated to countenance the indolent, but only to contribute to the relief of the industrious in the Heavenly Vineyard.

EDITOR.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
1. Gen. v. 24, . .	Walking with God, . . . <i>G. Whitefield</i>	1
2. Gen. vii. 16, . .	The Ark shut up, . . . <i>Anonymous</i>	2
3. Gen. xxxix. 9, . .	{ Sin the greatest of all } <i>Dr Bates</i> . . . 3	3
	{ Evils, }	
4. Gen. xlii. 36, . .	Jacob's Despondency, . . . <i>Editor</i> . . . 5	5
5. Gen. xlix. 18, . .	Jacob's Dying Song, . . . <i>Anonymous</i> . . . 6	6
6. Ex. x. 27-29, . .	Hardness of Heart, . . . <i>Anonymous</i> . . . 8	8
7. Ex. xiii. 21, 22, . .	{ The Pillar of Cloud and } <i>Anonymous</i> . . . 9	9
	{ of Fire, }	
8. Ex. xiv. 13, . .	Help from God, . . . <i>Jer. Burroughs</i> . . . 11	11
9. Num. xiv. 24, . .	Caleb's Integrity, . . . <i>Rich. Vines</i> . . . 12	12
10. Num. xxiii. 10, . .	{ The Death of the Righteous, }	13
	{ The Days of Heaven upon Earth, }	
11. Deut. xi. 21, . .	{ The Church in the Wilderness, }	14
	{ Faint, yet Pursuing, }	
12. Deut. xxxii. 10, . .	{ Micah and his Levite, }	15
	{ The Balances of the Sanctuary, }	
13. Judg. viii. 4, . .	The Saints' Keeper, . . . <i>Anonymous</i> . . . 16	16
14. Judg. xvii. 13, . .	The Way to the Highest Honour, }	17
	{ Obedience and Sacrifice, }	
15. 1 Sam. ii. 3, . .	"Thou art the Man," . . . <i>Editor</i> . . . 22	22
16. 1 Sam. ii. 9, . .	The Young Admonished . . . <i>W. Jay</i> . . . 24	24
17. 1 Sam. ii. 30, . .	{ The Danger of much Worldly Business, }	25
	{ The Prayer of Jabez, }	
18. 1 Sam. xv. 22, . .	The Rest of the People of God, }	26
19. 2 Sam. xii. 7, . .	{ God's Presence with a People, }	29
20. 1 Kings xviii. 12	The Eyes of the Lord, . . . <i>Archer Butler</i> . . . 31	31
21. 1 Kings xx. 40, . .	Uzziah's Sin, <i>Step. Marshall</i> . . . 32	32
22. 1 Chro. iv. 9, 10, . .	The Eyes of the Lord, . . . <i>J. Ryland, Sen.</i> . . . 33	33
23. 1 Chro. xxiii. 25, . .	Hezekiah Deserted, . . . <i>Anonymous</i> . . . 34	34
24. 2 Chro. xv. 2, . .	A Tender Spirit, <i>Dr Evans</i> . . . 34	34
25. 2 Chro. xvi. 9, . .		
26. 2 Chro. xxvi. 15, . .		
16,		
27. 2 Chro. xxxii. 31		
28. 2 Chro. xxxiv. 27		

			PAGE
29. Neh. v. 15,	{ The Fear of God a Pre- servative from Sin, .	<i>Dr Ryland</i>	36
30. Esther v. 6,	{ Esther an Example in Prayer, .	<i>Editor</i>	37
31. Job v. 17, 18,	{ The Benefits of Afflic- tion, .	<i>Dr Ryland</i>	38
32. Job v. 26,	{ The Aged Saint's Read- iness for Death and Glory, .	<i>T. Gibbons</i>	40
33. Job ix. 12,	{ The Hand of God in Afflictions, .	<i>W. Jay</i>	41
34. Job xiv. 14,	{ The Great Change, .	<i>N. Vincent</i>	42
35. Job xxii. 5,	{ Sin an Infinite Evil, .	<i>Anonymous</i>	44
36. Job xxii. 15-17,	{ Marking the Ways of Men, .	<i>Anonymous</i>	45
37. Job xxii. 21,	{ Acquaintance with God, Job's Desire after God, and his Doctrine of Prayer, .	<i>J. Janeway</i>	47
38. Job xxiii. 3, 4,	{ Depth of God's Ways, .	<i>Editor</i>	48
39. Job xxvi. 14,	{ The Future resigned to God, .	<i>Henri Chatelain</i>	50
40. Job xxxiv. 33,	{ A View of God's Glory Humbling to the Soul, Christ's Government in and over his People, .	<i>Editor</i>	ib.
41. Job xlii. 5, 6,	{ Trust in God, .	<i>Dr Witherspoon</i>	51
42. Ps. ii. 6, .	{ The Folly of Atheism, .	<i>Dr Temple</i>	52
43. Ps. xiii. 5,	{ Death no Bar to a Be- liever's Happiness, .	<i>F. J. Durand</i>	53
44. Ps. xiv. 1,	{ The Blessedness of For- giveness, .	<i>Dr South</i>	54
45. Ps. xvii. 15,	{ The Divine Goodness the Foundation of Trust, .	<i>Dr Spurstowe</i>	55
46. Ps. xxxii. 1,	{ Hope Centred in God, .	<i>T. Vincent</i>	56
47. Ps. xxxvi. 7,	{ The King of kings, .	<i>Dr Chandler</i>	58
48. Ps. xxxix. 7,	{ Sacred Recollections, .	<i>T. Gibbons</i>	59
49. Ps. xlv. 2,	{ Beauty and Strength of Zion, .	<i>D. Katterns</i>	ib.
50. Ps. xlviii. 9,	{ The Saints' most excel- lent Sacrifice, .	<i>Editor</i>	60
51. Ps. xlviii. 12-14	{ The Sinner Cleansed, .	<i>Dr Owen</i>	61
52. Ps. l. 23, .	{ Purity, .	<i>J. Bond</i>	62
53. Ps. li. 7, .	{ Desires after Heaven, .	<i>Pierre du Bosc</i>	64
54. Ps. li. 10,	{ Christ the Restorer, .	<i>Dr Evans</i>	ib.
55. Ps. lv. 6,	{ The Prosperity of the Righteous, .	<i>Editor</i>	65
56. Ps. lxix. 4,	{ The Vanity of Human Thoughts, .	<i>J. Ryland, Sen.</i>	67
57. Ps. xcii. 12-15,		<i>W. Jay</i>	ib.
58. Ps. xciv. 11,		<i>A. Fuller</i>	70

			PAGE
59. Ps. xc. 7,	The Difference of Times,	<i>Dr Whichcot</i>	71
60. Ps. cxviii. 15,	Domestic Happiness,	<i>W. Jay</i>	<i>ib.</i>
61. Ps. cxviii. 27,	{ The Song and Sacrifice of Gratitude,	<i>Editor</i>	73
62. Ps. cxix. 6,	Sincere Obedience,	<i>Dr Manton</i>	<i>ib.</i>
63. Ps. cxix. 18,	Prayer for Illumination,	<i>Dr Manton</i>	75
64. Ps. cxix. 75,	{ Submission under Afflic- tion,	<i>Dr Manton</i>	76
65. Ps. cxix. 97,	Love to God's Law,	<i>Dr Manton</i>	77
66. Ps. cxxx. 7,	{ Israel's Hope Encou- raged,	<i>John Bunyan</i>	79
67. Ps. cxxxvi. 1,	The Duty of Praise,	<i>H. Grove</i>	80
68. Ps. cxlv. 11,	Glory of Christ's Kingdom	<i>R. Hall</i>	81
69. Ps. cxlvii. 11,	Hope and Fear Balanced,	<i>Matt. Henry</i>	82
70. Prov. iii. 17,	{ The Pleasantness of a Religious Life,	<i>Matt. Henry</i>	84
71. Prov. iv. 18,	{ The Advantages of a Religious Life,	<i>H. Grove</i>	87
72. Prov. x. 24,	{ The Desire of the Righ- teous Granted,	<i>John Bunyan</i>	88
73. Prov. xv. 32,	Despising the Soul,	<i>Matt. Henry</i>	89
74. Prov. xviii. 10,	{ The Security of Those who Trust in God,	<i>Dr Witherspoon</i>	90
75. Prov. xxii. 2,	The Equality of Men,	<i>H. Grove</i>	92
76. Prov. xxviii. 13,	{ Sin Covered, and Sin Confessed,	<i>Henri Chatelain</i>	93
77. Eccles. vii. 2,	The House of Mourning,	<i>R. Cecil</i>	94
78. Eccles. viii. 11,	{ The Abuse of Divine Forbearance,	<i>W. Jay</i>	95
79. Song Sol. viii. 5,	{ Dependence on the Sa- viour,	<i>J. T. Nottidge</i>	97
80. Isa. i. 16,	Repentance Necessary,	<i>Dr Whichcot</i>	<i>ib.</i>
81. Isa. vi. 8,	Isaiah's Mission,	<i>Matt. Henry</i>	<i>ib.</i>
82. Isa. xxvii. 13,	{ The Great Trumpet Blown,	<i>Editor</i>	99
83. Isa. xl. 31,	Waiting upon the Lord,	<i>C. Jones</i>	100
84. Isa. xliii. 10,	{ Believers God's Wit- nesses,	<i>Dr Ryland</i>	101
85. Isa. xlv. 22,	Looking to Christ,	<i>President Davies</i>	102
86. Isa. lii. 1,	{ Strength and Beauty of the Church,	<i>Editor</i>	103
87. Isa. liv. 17,	{ Happy Immunity from Evil of the Righteous	<i>Editor</i>	104
88. Isa. lv. 1,	The Offer of Salvation,	<i>Superville le pere</i>	105
89. Isa. lv. 4,	The Faithful Witness,	<i>Editor</i>	107
90. Isa. lv. 6,	On Seeking the Lord,	<i>Pierre du Bosc</i>	108
91. Isa. lvii. 19,	The Choicest Fruit	<i>N. Hardy</i>	<i>ib.</i>
92. Isa. lxvi. 2,	{ Poor and contrite Spirits the Objects of Divine Favour,	<i>President Davies</i>	109

			PAGE
93.	Jer. iv. 14,	Vain Thoughts, . . .	<i>John Foster</i> . 110
94.	Jer. iv. 18,	The Bitterness of Sin, .	<i>B. Beddome</i> . 111
95.	Jer. xii. 5,	Gradations of Trial, .	<i>Editor</i> . 112
96.	Jer. xvii. 9,	{ The Deceitfulness of the Heart, . . . }	<i>Albert Barnes</i> . 114
97.	Lam. iii. 27,	{ The Good of Early Obe- dience, . . . }	<i>M. Mead</i> . 115
98.	Dan. ix. 8,	{ The Confession of True Penitence, . . . }	<i>B. Beddome</i> . 116
99.	Dan. ix. 24,	{ An Everlasting Right- eousness, . . . }	<i>G. Whitefield</i> . 117
100.	Hos. v. 15,	God's End in Affliction,	<i>Abp. Leighton</i> . 118
101.	Hos. vi. 4,	Inconstancy in Religion,	<i>H. Grove</i> . 119
+ 102.	Hos. vii. 9,	Spiritual Declension, .	<i>Editor</i> . 120
- 103.	Amos iv. 12,	{ Preparation to Meet God, . . . }	<i>Albert Barnes</i> . 122
- 104.	Amos vi. 1,	The Secure Alarmed, .	<i>W. Jay</i> . 123
- 105.	Amos ix. 9,	Judgment and Mercy, .	<i>Anonymous</i> . 124
106.	Jon. ii. 4,	The Prayer of Jonah .	<i>Anonymous</i> . 125
107.	Mic. vi. 8,	{ Walking Humbly with God, . . . }	<i>Dr Owen</i> . 127
108.	Mic. vi. 9,	The Voice of the Rod,	<i>Pierre du Bosc</i> . 128
109.	Zec. viii. 23,	Joining the Church, .	<i>Editor</i> . <i>ib.</i>
110.	Zec. xii. 10,	The Spirit Promised, .	<i>Anonymous</i> . 129
111.	Zec. xiii. 6,	The Wounds of Christ,	<i>Editor</i> . 130
112.	Matt. v. 5,	{ The Nature and Ne- cessity of Meekness, }	<i>A. Farindon</i> . 132
113.	Matt. v. 8,	The Pure in Heart, .	<i>H. Grove</i> . 134
114.	Matt. vi. 6,	Secret Prayer, . . .	<i>Albert Barnes</i> . 136
115.	Matt. vi. 21,	{ No Man ever went to Heaven whose Heart was not there first, . }	<i>Dr South</i> . 137
116.	Matt. vii. 12,	The Golden Rule, . . .	<i>Dr Watts</i> . 138
117.	Matt. vii. 13, 14,	{ The Strait Gate and the Narrow Way, . . . }	<i>Henri Chatelain</i> . 140
118.	Matt. vii. 14,	{ The Difficulty of Salva- tion, . . . }	<i>Timoleon Chem- inai</i> . 141
119.	Matt. x. 29,	On Providence, . . .	<i>D. Katterns</i> . 143
120.	Matt. xi. 19,	{ Wisdom Justified of her Children, . . . }	<i>M. Poole</i> . 144
121.	Matt. xi. 28,	Rest Promised by Christ,	<i>Anonymous</i> . 146
122.	Matt. xii. 20,	Weak Grace Victorious,	<i>S. Charnock</i> . 147
123.	Matt. xii. 42,	The Queen of the South,	<i>Anonymous</i> . 148
124.	Matt. xx. 6,	Slothfulness condemned	<i>Anonymous</i> . 149
125.	Matt. xxi. 42,	{ The Lord's Marvellous Doings, . . . }	<i>Anonymous</i> . 150
126.	Matt. xxii. 5,	{ Making Light of Salva- tion, . . . }	<i>President Davies</i> . 151
127.	Matt. xxiv. 45, 46,	{ The Faithful Minister,	<i>Antoine Clarion</i> . 153

128. Matt. xxv. 10,	{ Final Rejection of the Wicked, . . . }	<i>B. Beddome</i> . . .	153
129. Matt. xxvi. 58,	{ Following Christ Afar Off, . . . }	<i>J. Sherman</i> . . .	154
130. Mark iv. 23, .	{ The Gospel Demands Attention, . . . }	<i>W. Jay</i> . . .	156
131. Mark vi. 12, .	Repentance, . . .	<i>D. Black</i> . . .	157
132. Luke ii. 6, 7, .	No Room in the Inn, . . .	<i>Dr Hunter</i> . . .	158
133. Luke xii. 20, .	The Rich Fool, . . .	<i>Fletcher of Madeley</i> . . .	159
134. Luke xiv. 18, .	{ Reasons why Men are not Christians, . . . }	<i>Albert Barnes</i> . . .	161
135. Luke xiv. 22, .	"Yet there is Room," . . .	<i>Editor</i> . . .	162
136. Luke xiv. 28, .	{ Folly of Profession without Forethought, . . . }	<i>B. Beddome</i> . . .	163
137. Luke xv. 7, .	{ Joy of Angels over a Repenting Sinner, . . . }	<i>R. Hall</i> . . .	164
138. Luke xvi. 25, .	True Valuation of Man, . . .	<i>Dr Whichcot</i> . . .	165
139. Luke xviii. 7, .	{ God's Delays not Denials, . . . }	<i>Jean Guillebert</i> . . .	167
140. Luke xxiii. 38,	The Title on the Cross, . . .	<i>J. Flavel</i> . . .	168
141. John i. 14, .	{ Glory of Christ in His Incarnation, . . . }	<i>E. Godwin</i> . . .	169
142. John i. 18, .	God manifested in Christ . . .	<i>Anonymous</i> . . .	171
143. John iv. 10, .	Living Water . . .	<i>R. Cecil</i> . . .	172
144. John iv. 29, .	The Gospel at Sychar, . . .	<i>Editor</i> . . .	174
145. John iv. 46-50,	{ The Nobleman of Capernaum, . . . }	<i>R. Cecil</i> . . .	177
146. John vi. 27, .	{ Preference of the Soul to the Body, . . . }	<i>Dr Evans</i> . . .	178
147. John vii. 37, .	{ The Saviour's Invitation to Thirsty Souls, . . . }	<i>Dr Doddridge</i> . . .	180
148. John x. 30, .	{ The Divinity of Jesus Christ, . . . }	<i>Theo. Huet</i> . . .	181
149. John xi. 28, .	The Master Calling, . . .	<i>Editor</i> . . .	182
150. John xiii. 7, .	{ Future Revelations of Providences, . . . }	<i>Dr Doddridge</i> . . .	183
151. John xiii. 35, .	{ The Mark of Christ's Disciples, . . . }	<i>F. J. Durand</i> . . .	184
152. John xvi. 14, .	{ The Glory of Christ in the Work of Holy Spirit, . . . }	<i>Dr G. Spring</i> . . .	185
153. John xvi. 27, .	God's Love to the Saints, . . .	<i>B. Beddome</i> . . .	186
154. John xvii. 10, .	{ Jesus Glorified in his People, . . . }	<i>W. Jay</i> . . .	187
155. John xvii. 22, .	{ Mutual Glory of Christ and his People, . . . }	<i>B. Beddome</i> . . .	188
156. John xviii. 36, .	Christ's Kingdom, . . .	<i>Jer. Burroughs</i> . . .	189
157. John xx. 20, .	Faith's View of Christ, . . .	<i>R. M. M'Cheyne</i> . . .	190
158. Acts i. 9, .	The Ascension of Christ . . .	<i>Antoine Clarion</i> . . .	191

			PAGE
159.	Acts ii. 23,	Nature of Christ's Death	<i>J. Flavel</i> . 192
160.	Acts ix. 20,	{ Christ the Subject of Gospel Ministry . }	<i>J. Guyse</i> . 193
161.	Acts xvii. 31,	The Last Judgment,	<i>F. J. Durand</i> . 194
162.	Acts xxiv. 25,	Paul and Felix,	<i>Dr Chandler</i> . 195
163.	Acts xxvi. 28,	Almost Christian,	<i>G. Whitefield</i> . 196
164.	Rom. vi. 23,	The Wages of Sin, &c. {	<i>Michael le Fau- cheur</i> . 197
165.	Rom. viii. 14,	{ Sons of God led by the Spirit, . . . }	<i>Bp. Hall</i> . 199
166.	Rom. ix. 5,	The Deity of Christ,	<i>S. Hayward</i> . 200
167.	Rom. xv. 29,	{ The Plenitude of Gospel Blessings, . . . }	<i>Editor</i> . 201
168.	1 Cor. v. 8,	Sincerity, . . .	<i>Dr Evans</i> . 203
169.	1 Cor. ix. 24,	The Christian Race,	<i>Editor</i> . 204
170.	1 Cor. x. 13,	Temptation,	<i>D. Katterns</i> . 205
171.	1 Cor. xiii. 8,	Excellence of Charity,	<i>H. Grove</i> . 206
172.	1 Cor. xv. 26,	{ The Last Enemy De- stroyed, . . . }	<i>R. Hall</i> . 207
173.	1 Cor. xv. 55,	Death without a Sting,	<i>N. Vincent</i> . 208
174.	1 Cor. xv. 58,	{ The Labour and Re- ward of a Christian, }	<i>W. Gurnall</i> . 210
175.	1 Cor. xvi. 19,	A Church in the House,	<i>Matt. Henry</i> . 211
176.	2 Cor. iv. 5,	{ Temper and Conduct of First Preachers, &c. }	<i>Dr Doddridge</i> . 213
177.	2 Cor. iv. 7,	{ Divinity of Gospel prov- ed by Frailty of Apos- tles, . . . }	<i>F. J. Durand</i> . 215
178.	2 Cor. v. 1,	{ The House not made with Hands, . . . }	<i>Antoine Clarion</i> 216
179.	2 Cor. v. 10,	{ Certainty of a Future Judgment, . . . }	<i>Dr South</i> . 217
180.	2 Cor. v. 21,	Christ made Sin for Us,	<i>Dr Williams</i> . 218
181.	2 Cor. vi. 17, 18,	{ Principles on which to profess Religion, . }	<i>Albert Barnes</i> . 219
182.	2 Cor. x. 4, 5,	{ Success of the Gospel on the Souls of Men, . }	<i>President Davies</i> 221
183.	2 Cor. xii. 1-4,	Paul's Rapture,	<i>Antoine Clarion</i> <i>ib.</i>
184.	2 Cor. xii. 9,	The Sufficiency of Grace	<i>Jean Guillebert</i> 223
185.	Gal. iii. 28,	{ The Unity of all Be- lievers, . . . }	<i>Editor</i> . 224
186.	Gal. v. 17,	The Flesh and the Spirit,	<i>Henri Chatelain</i> 226
187.	Gal. vi. 14,	Glorying in the Cross,	<i>Dr Witherspoon</i> <i>ib.</i>
188.	Eph. i. 5,	Adoption,	<i>D. Katterns</i> . 227
189.	Eph. ii. 8,	Grace and Faith,	<i>Dr Doddridge</i> . 229
190.	Eph. ii. 18,	{ The Nature and Beauty of Gospel Worship, . }	<i>Dr Owen</i> . 230
191.	Eph. iv. 16,	{ The Church edifying it- self in Love, . . }	<i>N. Vincent</i> . 232
192.	Eph. v. 1,	The Imitation of God,	<i>B. Beddome</i> . 233

193. Eph. v. 16,	. Redeeming the Time,	. A. Fuller	. 234
194. Eph. v. 18,	. { Being Filled with the Spirit,	Dr Evans	. 235
195. Phil. i. 21,	. { Christ the Believer's Gain in Life and Death,	Dr Tuckney	. 237
196. Phil. i. 23, 24,	. { Christ is Best; or, St Paul's Strait,	Dr Sibbes	. 238
197. Phil. ii. 16,	. The Lights of the World,	Anonymous	. 240
198. Phil. iii. 13, 14,	. { The Believer Pressing Forward,	Gabriel Dumont	241
199. Phil. iii. 20,	. { A Heavenly Conversation,	Jer. Burroughs	243
200. Phil. iv. 11,	. Christian Contentment,	Dr Evans	. 244
201. Col. i. 12,	. The Saints in Light,	W. W.	. 245
202. Col. iii. 1,	. { Believers Risen with Christ,	W. Jay	. 246
203. Col. iii. 3,	. The Hidden Life,	Dr Watts	. 247
204. Col. iii. 17,	. { Doing all in the Name of Christ,	Dr Wilkinson	. 249
205. 2 Thess. i. 12,	. { The Glory of Christ in his Followers,	Dr G. Spring	. 250
206. 1 Tim. i. 5,	. A Good Conscience,	D. Katterns	. ib.
207. 1 Tim. i. 15,	. { Certainty of Salvation by Jesus Christ,	Henri Chatelain	252
208. 1 Tim. ii. 5,	. The Mediator,	T. Hall	. 254
209. 1 Tim. iv. 8,	. { Nature and Advantages of True Godliness,	Henri Chatelain	255
210. 2 Tim. iii. 1,	. Perilous Times,	Dr Owen	. 256
211. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8,	. Faith's Fight Crowned,	T. Watson	. 257
212. 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18,	. { God's Goodness in greatest Distresses,	Dr Sibbes	. 259
213. Tit. ii. 6,	. Sober-mindedness,	Matt. Henry	. 260
214. Philemon 18,	. The Sinner's Substitute,	Editor	. 262
215. Heb. ii. 10,	. { The Sufferings of the Saviour Necessary,	W. Jay	. 264
216. Heb. iii. 13,	. Deceitfulness of Sin,	Dr Witherspoon	265
217. Heb. iv. 14,	. { Holding Fast a Christian Profession,	Dr Hunter	. 266
218. Heb. iv. 16,	. The Throne of Grace,	John Bunyan	. 267
219. Heb. v. 2,	. { Christ's Heart in Heaven, &c.	S. E. Pearce	. 269
220. Heb. vii. 25,	. { Christ a Complete Saviour,	John Bunyan	. 271
221. Heb. x. 24,	. { Provoking to Love and Good Works,	Editor	. 272
222. Heb. xi. 1,	. The Discoveries of Faith	E. Polhill	. 274
223. Heb. xi. 17,	. The Sacrifice of Isaac,	D. Katterns	. ib.
224. Heb. xi. 27,	. { The Faith of Moses,	De Superville le fils	. 276

		PAGE
225. Heb. xiii. 7,	{ Imitating Departed Worth, . . . }	<i>Dr Wardlaw</i> . 277
226. James iv. 17,	Knowledge and Practice	<i>T. Watson</i> . 278
227. 1 Pet. i. 2,	The Beauty of Grace, .	<i>T. Watson</i> . 279
228. 1 Pet. i. 8,	{ Love to an Unseen Sa- viour, . . . }	<i>S. Hayward</i> . 280
229. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11,	{ Search after Gospel Knowledge, . . . }	<i>Anonymous</i> . 281
230. 1 Pet. i. 12,	{ Redemption Admired by Angels, . . . }	<i>Dr Witherspoon</i> 283
231. 1 Pet. i. 17,	Life a Sojourning, .	<i>Bp. Hall</i> . 284
232. 1 Pet. ii. 21,	Christ our Example, .	<i>N. Vincent</i> . 285
233. 1 Pet. iv. 18,	Difficulty of Salvation,	<i>Dr Sibbes</i> . 286
234. 2 Pet. i. 4,	The Precious Promises,	<i>Dr Spurstowe</i> . 287
235. 2 Pet. i. 5,	Christian Fortitude, .	<i>Dr Evans</i> . 289
236. 2 Pet. iii. 18,	Growth in Grace, .	<i>T. Watson</i> . 291
237. 1 John i. 8,	{ Self-Delusion as to our State, . . . }	<i>Archer Butler</i> . 292
238. 1 John ii. 1,	The Advocate, . . .	<i>P. Gibbs</i> . 293
239. 1 John iii. 3,	The Pattern of Purity,	<i>Dr Sibbes</i> . 294
240. 1 John v. 4,	Faith's Victory, .	<i>D. Black</i> . 295
241. 1 John v. 10,	{ The Inward Witness to Christianity, . . . }	<i>Dr Watts</i> . <i>ib.</i>
242. 3 John, ver. 2,	The well-beloved Gaius,	<i>Editor</i> . 297
243. Rev. ii. 4,	Loss of First Love, .	<i>R. Cecil</i> . 298
244. Rev. iii. 20,	Jesus at the Door, .	<i>Henri Chatelain</i> 300
245. Rev. xiv. 4,	{ The Followers of the Lamb, . . . }	<i>W. Dyer</i> . 302
246. Rev. xiv. 12,	{ The Triumphs of Pa- tience, . . . }	<i>W. Jay</i> . 303
247. Rev. xix. 6,	{ Joy in God's Govern- ment, . . . }	<i>Anonymous</i> . 304
248. Rev. xxi. 22,	{ A City without a Tem- ple, . . . }	<i>Anonymous</i> . 305
249. Rev. xxi. 23,	{ Christ the Glory of Heaven, . . . }	<i>Dr G. Spring</i> . 307
250. Rev. xxi. 25,	No Night in Heaven, .	<i>Dr Watts</i> . 308

THE PREACHER'S PORTFOLIO.

WALKING WITH GOD.

GENESIS v. 24.—“And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him.”

Perhaps one of the most common objections which men make against yielding obedience to Divine commands is this, that they are not practicable, because contrary to flesh and blood. The Holy Ghost foreseeing this, has taken care to inspire holy men of old to record the examples of many, who, even under the Old Testament dispensation, were enabled to take Christ's yoke upon them, and counted his service perfect freedom. What a great cloud of witnesses we have there presented to our view.

- I. What is implied in these words, Walking with God.
 - II. Some means by which believers may keep up their walk with God.
 - III. Some motives to excite us to come and walk with God.
- I. What is implied.
 1. That the prevailing power of the heart's enmity to God is taken away.
 2. That the individual is actually reconciled to God.
 3. A settled, abiding communion and fellowship with God.
 4. Our making progress in the divine life.
 - II. How is this done, or by what means, &c.
 1. By reading the Word of God.

2. By secret prayer.
3. Holy and frequent meditation.
4. Observance of providential dealings.
5. Watchfulness of Spirit's work within.
6. Walking in Divine ordinances.
7. Choosing godly associates.

III. Offer some motives, &c.

1. It is a very honourable thing.
2. It is a pleasing thing.
3. There is heaven at the end of the walk.

G. WHITEFIELD.

THE ARK SHUT UP.

GENESIS vii. 16.—“And the Lord shut him in.”

“I am he that openeth, and no man shutteth; that shutteth, and no man openeth.” This is put forth as the Divine prerogative, announced from heaven amid the closing splendours of Revelation, and illustrated in our text among its earliest records. This passage relates to a simple circumstance, and might easily be passed by without much notice; its peculiarity is that what might have been supposed to be the act of Noah himself is here ascribed to the hand of God.

- I. It is remarkable that the record only relates to Noah himself, “The Lord shut *him* in,” although there are others involved, his wife, his sons, his sons' wives, &c. Noah was the person for whose sake, and in whom they were accepted and saved. Thus early in the world's history the leading principle of God's redeeming transactions with men was set forth. So Abraham—so David. It is remarkable that these illustrations are confined to the Old Testament; one only, the greatest and the last, and which all others typified, the acceptance of sinners in Christ,

is contained in the New Testament. The adoption of this principle involves one or two important consequences:—

1. It illustrates the extent of the Divine mercy. It is an expedient for showing mercy on a wider scale than would otherwise be possible.
2. It necessarily excludes all boasting.
3. In order to be saved on such terms, there must be some relation between the parties.

II. Examine the particular statement of the text, "And the Lord shut him in." This act of God may be regarded;—

1. As a seal of final exclusion to the ungodly.
2. As a seal and pledge of perfect security to those within the ark.
3. As the final reward of accepted piety.

III. This subject illustrates,—

1. The severity of God against the obstinately impenitent.
2. The great truth, that in the midst of wrath there is mercy.
3. The certain preservation of God's servants in the midst of all judgments.

ANONYMOUS.

SIN THE GREATEST OF ALL EVILS.

GENESIS xxxix. 9.—"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

I will explain and prove that temptations to sin, how alluring soever, or terrifying, are to be rejected with abhorrence.

I. Sin, considered in itself, is the greatest evil.

1. Sin is a rebellion against the sovereign majesty of God, that gives the life of authority to the law.
2. It vilifies the ruling wisdom of God, that presented the law to men.

3. It is contrariety to the unspotted holiness of God.
4. It is the contempt and abuse of his excellent goodness.
5. The sinner disparages the impartial justice of God.
6. He implicitly denies God's omniscience.
7. He slights the power of God.

II. Sin, relatively to us, is the most pernicious and destructive evil. If we compare it with temporal evil, it preponderates over all that men are liable to in the present world. Diseases in our bodies, disasters in our estates, disgrace in our reputation, are in just esteem far less evil than the evil of sin. All temporal evils are consistent with the love of God; other evils God uses as medicinal preparations for the cure of sin. The least degree of sin is fatal. It is the severest punishment that God inflicts on sinners on this side hell. Consider the evils that are consequential to sin.

I. Such as proceed from it by emanation:—

1. It has stained and tainted man with universal, intimate, and permanent pollution.
2. It has degraded man from his native state and dignity.
3. It has broken the sweet peace and blessed concord of the soul. Peace with God, internal peace, and agreement with one another.

II. The evils consequent to sin as its penal effects:—

1. The fall of the angels.
2. Of man. Sinners shall be excluded from communion with God in heaven; and God's justice inflicts the most heavy punishment upon sense and conscience in the damned.

III. Application.

1. How perverse and depraved the minds and wills of men to choose sin rather than affliction.
2. The wonderful patience of God, who bears with a world of sinners.
3. The consideration of the evil of sin heightens our obligations to Divine mercy in saving us.

4. It should excite a holy circumspection to keep ourselves from its defilement.
5. It is a powerful motive to our solemn and speedy repentance.

Some sins derive a greater guilt from the circumstances in the commission. Such are sins against knowledge, sins committed against the love as well as the law of God. Sins committed against solemn promises and engagements to forsake them. Let us renew our repentance every day; let not the wounds of our spirits putrify.

WILLIAM BATES, D.D., 1663.

JACOB'S DESPONDENCY.

GENESIS xlii. 36.—“All these things are against me.”

The periods which make the most brilliant figure on the pages of history were periods of anxiety and trouble to the men or nations who then occupied the stage of being. If a biographer has much to relate, the life of his hero must have been one of suffering. So it is with the patriarch Jacob—his memoirs occupy a larger space in Scripture than is allotted to any other patriarch, and his miseries were more numerous and severe. No land seems to yield repose to him, no relation is free from affliction. Difficulties come, and pass away from him to prepare the path for greater than themselves. The text was uttered under circumstances of intense anguish—[Relate them]—It has often been repeated since. If not frequently uttered, it is silently indulged. Let us investigate its causes, and its cure.

I. The complaint.

II. Its cause.

III. Its cure.

I. The complaint.—The Church is heir to the cross. “Those whom God afflicts in mercy, and Satan in malice,” says an old writer, “must needs have many sorrows.” Especially the complaint of the text seems applicable when inward and outward troubles meet.

II. Its cause.

1. Ignorance of the nature and design of Divine dispensations.
2. Forgetfulness of Divine consolations.
3. False reasoning upon one's spiritual condition. Men, by a natural kind of popery, seek comfort in sanctification, neglecting justification.

III. Its cure.

1. A sense of the mighty power and all-sufficiency of God.
2. A conviction of the Divine wisdom.
3. A firm belief in the infinite rectitude of the Most High.
4. A persuasion of the love of God.
5. A clear view of the gospel method of salvation.
6. An earnest, and foretaste, and good hope of future bliss.

EDITOR.

JACOB'S DYING SONG.

GENESIS xlix. 18.—“I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.”

This phrase occurs in the midst of the blessing of Dan, but what connection it has with that which goes before and that which follows, is a question which has given no small trouble to expositors.

There are two opinions, among many others, that especially deserve notice. Some say that the patriarch, weak in body, and spent with the effort of delivering so much of a long discourse, paused for a few moments,

and, returning to his own case, looked up to heaven, and gave utterance to his own hopes in the prospect of eternity, in this ejaculation. This is probable, natural, beautiful, and impressive. Others say that the Holy Spirit, when he speaks, will not be bound by artificial methods, but will act and speak with freedom, and like a God. His impulses on the mind are sudden, strong, and their expression, therefore, often abrupt. The words certainly express the leading attitude of Jacob's disposition through life, and they are also a just representation of the spirit of faith in all ages.

I. In order to justify "waiting," we require a promise on the part of God.

II. Let us inquire what this posture of spirit presupposes and comprehends.

1. That the soul has actually and truly embraced the hope of salvation.
2. That the believer is in such a state of mind and practice as the conditions of the promise require.
3. Waiting comprehends,—earnest desire, confident expectation, patient tarrying for God's time—because events which appear adverse prove to be favourable in the end, and because God often delays for a long time the blessings he confers.

III. To what does this disposition lead?

1. Diligent seeking.
2. Patient endurance of suffering—this lightens the burden and strengthens the sufferer.

The text exhibits:—The divine basis of religion, whose ultimate foundation is the word of God.—The importance of religion which waits for nothing less than salvation.—The necessity for intense, earnest, devoted expectations.

ANONYMOUS.

HARDNESS OF HEART.

Exodus x. 27, 29.—“But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go,” &c.

- I. The nature,
- II. The cause,
- III. The signs,
- IV. The end, of hardness of heart.

I. The nature, &c.—One or two things are called in Scripture by this name:—

- 1. These terms are often used to signify want of feeling and sensibility in reference to the great subjects of Divine Truth that ought to affect the mind powerfully. —Two special tests of this malady:—Sin, and the Sufferings of Christ.
- 2. Want of perception or of spiritual intelligence, when it proceeds from moral causes, is called in Scripture hardness of heart.—“How is it that ye do not understand: have ye your heart yet hardened?”
- 3. Unbelief and disobedience are resolved into hardness of heart.—Pharaoh.

II. The cause, &c.—Great difficulty has arisen in the minds of some because God is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart—as if the cause were God's inscrutable decree and irresistible will—(quote passages),—whereas God is often said to do that which he merely permits to be done. Look at the case before us. It was manifestly the man himself, for the supposition that God himself put forth a sort of secret power and influence, for the purpose of keeping him from doing that which he ought to have done, is simply absurd; and to suppose that the Sacred Writers should confess it, is to suppose that they deliberately set themselves to dishonour the character of God. The reason why it is imputed to the Lord is, because the depravity of this man's heart took occasion, from

the Divine judgments, to set himself against them and defy them. Else these judgments were intended to overcome him—to bring him to repentance and reformation. We must remark, further, that it is imputed to the Lord, because the whole series of judgments must be regarded in the light of *Temptations*, the effect of which was to bring out more and more the hardness and depravity of his heart. It is the Lord's prerogative to try and prove men, that he may discover all that is in their heart. Some will remain unchanged and impenitent, some are humbled, convicted, and converted. Thus, it is not meant that God was the *cause*, but only that his judgments were the *occasion*; the true and direct cause must be sought in the sinner himself. On him lies all the guilt. Here are two causes in operation,—*Sin* and *Superstition*, &c.

III. The signs, &c.

1. Continued disobedience.
2. Neglect of means of grace.
3. Abuse of long-suffering and mercy of God.

IV. The end, &c.

1. It led to final impenitence.
2. It led to his total abandonment of God.
3. It led to God's abandonment of him.
4. The end was destruction.

There is a remedy for hardness of heart. The grace of God can soften the hardest heart—by Pharoah that grace was not sought; even the grace shown was rejected. God has covenanted that he will soften the hard heart, if it be brought to him.

ANONYMOUS.

THE PILLAR OF CLOUD AND OF FIRE.

Exodus xiii. 21, 22.—“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar

of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."

The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was twofold. It was both temporal and spiritual; an interposition not only of Divine providence, but also of Divine grace. Their temporal condition in Egypt is too well known to need explanation. Look at their spiritual state. Surrounded by the most ridiculous and debasing idolatry, without any written word,—settled order of worship,—or means of imparting religious instruction. The preservation of the church during these four hundred years is a miracle of which the burning bush is a lively emblem. The text points out one of the most remarkable provisions made for their safe conduct through the wilderness. Most wonderful amidst innumerable wonders! It has its antitype in God's conduct to his people now.

Refer this emblem to three subjects:—

I. The conduct of Divine Providence.

II. The instructions of Inspiration.

III. The person and office of Jesus Christ.

I. The conduct of Divine Providence.

1. The mystery of its proceedings.
2. Alternate changes of appearance.
3. Different aspect to the righteous and the wicked.
4. Presence of God indicated by its appearance.

Uses.—Follow its guidance—Regulate your dispositions by the fact that God is in all events. Rely with confidence upon his unerring wisdom.

II. The guidance of Inspiration:—Men cannot find the right way without a Divine guide.

1. The mysteries of Divine word—brightest truths covered with a veil.
2. The consolations and hopes of Divine word are brightest in the night of adversity.

3. Its instructions accommodate themselves to the changing scenes and exigencies of religious experience. The Word of God is a miraculous, supernatural guide—it is safe, luminous, not to be mistaken.

III. The person and office of Christ:—

1. The mysterious constitution of his person.
2. His perpetual presence with his people. He conducts through the dark waters of repentance. He protects from all enemies. He sanctifies and hallows all services. He enlightens and instructs them.

IV. Application.

1. Cast the responsibility of all your movements on God. "He shall choose our inheritance."
2. Make the Word of God your constant guide.
3. Yield yourselves into the hands of Christ.
4. All impenitent sinners are in the condition of the Egyptians.

ANONYMOUS.

HELP FROM GOD.

Exodus xiv. 13.—"Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

Doctrine I. When God is in a way of mercy and salvation to his people, he often brings them into great straits:—

1. To humble them.
2. Because he delights in the exercise of faith.
3. That he may draw out their prayers.
4. To discover the wicked.
5. That adversaries may vent their malice.
6. That the work of Christ may be more manifest.

Doctrine II. In these straits God's people are mightily troubled:—

1. Because the flesh is powerful.
2. There is guilt within.
3. We are prone to worldly confidence.

Doctrine III. In the time of these straits it is our duty to stand still, and look for God's salvation.

1. For the quieting of our spirits.—Because then we are able to look to the wisdom, faithfulness, and power of God. Without quietness we cannot exercise our graces, nor show our submission, or reverence.—We are unable to listen, and hinder others.
2. To expect salvation from God.—Hereby we sanctify his name—Show the excellency of faith—Engage God in our cause.

Doctrine IV. The sight of salvation coming after straits is glorious to behold.

JEREMIAH BURROUGHS, 1646.

CALEB'S INTEGRITY.

NUMBERS xiv. 24.—“But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.”

Observation I. That God makes great reckoning of, and gives special testimony unto, such of his servants as follow him fully.

Observation II. That following the Lord fully, proceeds from another spirit than that which actuated unbelieving Israelites.

Observation III. That none who, out of a right spirit, follow the Lord fully, shall be losers thereby.

Consider I. What ground-work is requisite in a man to enable him to follow the Lord fully?

1. There must be a principle of saving faith.
2. He must esteem God to be the chief good.
3. He must in all things value God's interest before his own.
4. He must be able to die for God.

II. What it is to follow the Lord fully? It excludes

partial obedience, sinister ends, lukewarmness, formality, fickleness, and includes,—

1. Obedience to the whole will of God.
2. Freeness of obedience.
3. Satisfaction with measure of success.
4. Disregard of men.
5. Disregard of impediments.

III. How God rewards those who follow him fully?

1. They shall see and know more of him.
2. They shall receive more from him.

RICHARD VINES, 1642.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

NUMBERS xxiii. 10.—“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”

These words express the most sublime and most important desire that man can express on this earth. But we are surprised they should proceed from the mouth of Balaam. Possessed of the knowledge of the true God, this apostate seduced by his promises the king of Moab. He dared to wish for power to curse that Israel whom God had blessed. By an infamous artifice he corrupted the children of Israel, and was the cause of the deaths of 24,000 of their number. Degraded, miserable wretch, with a heart depraved and sold to covetousness, he is a proof of the declaration of the Saviour that it is possible to prophesy in his name, and yet be cast out of his kingdom. Here is one of the greatest triumphs of virtue:—those who trample under foot its sacred laws are sometimes compelled to pay to it their homage.

- I. The extent and meaning of this wish.
- II. Its wisdom, or what it is to die the death of the righteous.

I. The extent and meaning of this wish.

The righteous die *physically* like other men; but, *morally*, or in point of character, there is a great difference.

1. They die in faith, which has wrought hopes of immortality.
2. They die in repentance.
3. They die in charity.

II. The happiness of this death.

1. They experience deliverance from all the evils to which they have been subject here, whether of body or spirit, from the sins of others and of themselves.
2. They experience inestimable blessings and anticipate countless benefits which await them.

III. Application.

1. The wish to die as the righteous, without conformity to his life, is vain and foolish.
2. The only safe and sure course is to seek at once the character and consolation of the righteous.

F. G. DURAND, 1770.

THE DAYS OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH.

DEUTERONOMY xi. 21.—“As the days of heaven upon the earth.”

This remarkable expression is contained in an address which Moses made to the people of Israel, a little before his death, wherein he most earnestly exhorted them to personal obedience, careful instruction of children, &c., &c.

It seems probable that the phrase relates more directly to the *duration* of their prosperity in the earthly Canaan, than to the *spiritual nature* of their enjoyments. As that temporal inheritance was a figure and pledge of a better country, we may very justly improve such a striking expression by applying

it to the exalted nature of those enjoyments, which, even in this life, are often connected with a close walk with God.

I. When may our days be said to be like the days of heaven upon earth?

II. What course should we take in order that our days may be like, &c.

I. When may *our* days, &c.

1. When we enjoy much of a sense of the Divine presence, and live in the contemplation of the glorious perfections of God.
2. When the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
3. When we enjoy a spirit of gratitude and praise.
4. Brotherly love and enjoyment of happiness of fellow-saints.
5. Great victories over sin, and intense love of purity.
6. Cheerful obedience to commands of God.
7. Frequent meditations on the heavenly state.

II. What course should we take, &c.

1. We must be partakers of vital faith in Christ, and be renewed in the spirit of our minds.
2. We must make glorifying God our highest aim.
3. Our hearts must be weaned from earthly things.
4. We must be watchful against grieving the Holy Spirit.
5. We must be perpetually employed for God, and resign our wills to the will of God.

DR RYLAND.

THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS.

DEUTERONOMY xxxii. 10.—“He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.”

I. The Christian's condition.

II. The Christian's consolation.

I. The Christian's condition:—"In a desert land—in the waste howling wilderness."

1. A state of want and privation.
2. A state of danger.
3. A state of much sorrow and suffering.
4. A state of helpless dependence.

Remark:—That a great part of this sorrow and tribulation arose from the infirmities of their own minds; for if they had trusted fully in God they might have passed through the desert in undiminished comfort and uninterrupted triumph. It is just so with the Christian's life on earth.

II. The Christian's consolation:—"He led him about, instructed him, kept him," &c. The care and kindness here described as divinely bestowed upon Israel are an image of the consolations enjoyed by the Church.

1. That care and tenderness rest upon the same principles.
2. It consists in analogous acts.
3. It tends to a like issue.

ANONYMOUS.

FAINT, YET PURSUING.

JUDGES viii. 4.—"Faint, yet pursuing."

Words applied to Gideon and his three hundred soldiers.—Reasons why they were faint.—General remarks on history of Gideon.—Purpose to which we apply these words stated and vindicated

- I. A case analogous to the Christian life.
- II. A condition often realised in Christian experience.
- III. A duty incumbent in such cases upon all Christians.

I. A case analogous, &c.

1. A case, not only of warfare in general, but of pursuit against a conquered tyrant and enemy.

2. A warfare that aims at entire freedom.
 3. A strife, according to human judgment, unequal and little likely to succeed.
 4. Not conducted without means, yet entirely dependent upon Divine counsel and power.
- II. A condition often realised, &c.—Liability to faintness recognised in Scripture, (quote), arising:—
1. Not only from the labours, but the discouragements of the Christian life.
 2. From the privations incident to a state of warfare.
 3. From the influence of unbelieving fears.
- III. The duty incumbent under such circumstances:—
- “Pursuing.” Consider,
1. How great and good is the cause in which you are engaged!
 2. What great encouragements you have to persevere!
 3. What loss will be sustained if you fail!
 4. What unspeakable reward awaits the victor!

ANONYMOUS.

MICAH AND HIS LEVITE.

JUDGES xvii. 13.—“Then said Micah, Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.”

The self-complacency of Micah may serve to reprove some popular delusions in religion of a later day.

I. Confidence in external worship.

II. Satisfaction with theoretical knowledge. Obedience is the life blood of religion. It must be free and cheerful, extensive, sincere, constant, evangelical.

III. Excuses for allowed sins.

IV False views of the character of God.

EDITOR.
C

THE BALANCES OF THE SANCTUARY.

1 SAMUEL ii. 3.—“The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.”

Introduction:—The facts of the history. [Perhaps an allusion to the reproaches of Peninnah and the rebukes of old Eli.]

I. The subject of trial: “Actions.”

II. The qualification of the trier: “The Lord is a God of knowledge.”

III. The process: “Actions are weighed.”

IV. Conclusions.

I. The subject, &c.—Actions are very deceptive: they present to the eyes of men, only their externals, not their hidden principles. Men are continually deceived in their judgment. *e. g.* There are two acts of prayer, the one precisely resembles the other, in outward form, in the words employed, the attitude of body, the aspect of the countenance; but the one is a true worshipper, the other is a hypocrite.—There are two acts of almsgiving, &c. Sometimes actions are not in any degree what they pretend to be, sometimes in part only what they seem to be. There are some things in which the conduct of men appears worse, and some in which it appears better than it really is.

II. The qualification, &c.

1. The Lord knows all the motives and thoughts of the heart.
2. He possesses a perfect knowledge of all the circumstances of every action.

III. The process. Men may weigh other things, but not these.

1. The standard. His holy law. His Divine word.
2. There is always an object in weighing.

IV. Conclusions.

1. Weigh your own characters and actions, not those of others.
2. If found wanting, remember, (1.) The righteousness of Christ will outweigh all claims of the law. (2.) A renewed heart will never be found wanting. (3.) Actions that are the fruit of Divine grace will be approved.
3. There must be no hypocritical pretences.
4. Remember the great account.

ANONYMOUS.

 THE SAINTS' KEEPER.

1 SAMUEL ii. 9.—“He will keep the feet of his saints.”

Judea, a country everywhere covered with stones and rocks, making the surface very uneven, and, except where a way was properly prepared, very dangerous. A traveller needed to proceed with great caution, and to look well to his steps, or he would be in constant danger of dashing his foot against some impediment that would throw him to the ground, or, perhaps, to the hazard of his life, cast him from some precipice. Frequent references to this peculiarity of the country in Holy Writ, (Psalm xci. 11, 12, &c., &c.) Hence, also, a staff or stick was the invariable companion of the traveller, (Psalm xxiii. 4, &c.)

I. Contemplate the Christian as a traveller.

There are three dangers of the feet:—1. Wandering out of the way. 2. Stumbling or falling. 3. Failing through weakness, weariness, or injury.

II. What God will do for his saints: “He will keep,” &c.

1. Guidance in the right way.
2. Preservation from sin or wandering.
3. Protection from stumbling-blocks. These may be classi-

fied thus, (a) Scandals or offences brought by others. (b) Stumbling-blocks of speculative error. (c) Unbelief or doubting thoughts.

4. Preservation from weariness or fainting.

III. How will God do this?

1. By constant watchfulness on his part.
2. By the infusion of grace and strength at all times of need.
3. Sometimes he removes stumbling-blocks out of the way.
4. By strengthening the principles of grace.
5. Not without the use of means.

IV. Why will he do so? How are we sure?

1. Because he has set his love upon them.
2. Because their holiness is of great value in his sight.
3. Because they are very costly objects of affection.
4. Because he has solemnly engaged to do so.

ANONYMOUS.

THE WAY TO THE HIGHEST HONOUR.

1 SAMUEL ii. 30.—“For them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”

I. What it is to honour God? There is no way of honouring God, but in his Son. See John v. 23.

1. When thoughts of God are sweet to a man.
2. When the honour of God is precious in our eyes, and his glory the continual object of desire.
3. When we think ourselves honoured by God's service.
4. When a man engages himself to the utmost for God, and yet acknowledges that he is an unprofitable servant.
5. When we ascribe to God the successes we obtain.
6. When we seek only the honour that comes from God as the reward of his service.

II. How God honours them that honour him?

1. He gives them honourable employment.
2. He keeps them unblemished in adversity and prosperity.
3. He gives them high esteem in the hearts of the faithful.

4. He honours them when others dishonour them.
5. He honours them with a sweet and precious name after death.
6. He honours them in their posterity.

III. How do men dishonour God?

1. When they slight the offers of Christ which God makes.
2. When they are content to live without God.
3. When they do not fear his displeasure.
4. When they exalt their own will or wisdom against God.
5. When they are unaffected by things which dishonour God.

IV. How does God dishonour men?

1. He will not use them in high employments.
2. He will give them up to base and dishonourable lusts.
3. He will cast them out of the hearts and prayers of his people.
4. After this life their names shall rot.
5. God will dishonour their children.

A man may have the highest honour upon earth, yet he may be, before God and all the saints, a vile person. He may be honourable in this life, and miserable in the life to come.

W. STRONG, 1646.

OBEDIENCE AND SACRIFICE.

1 SAMUEL xv. 22.—“Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

I. Remark on the history which gave occasion to the prophet's words. The injustice and impiety of Amalekites. The determination of God to punish them. Their continued and increased wickedness, notwithstanding the long-suffering of God. Nevertheless, we are incapable of forming a proper judgment of the procedures of Divine providence, much

of the history must be resolved into the sovereignty of God. The command to destroy them was given to Saul; out of covetousness he spared what was most valuable of their effects. Hence the protest of Samuel.

1. How easily are people misled into disobedience by present interest or carnal inclination!
2. How natural for men, when challenged with a fault, to lay the blame upon others!
3. It is not unusual for sinners to imagine they have been obedient to God, even in the very action which has remarkably shown their disobedience.
4. How often excuses for sin are aggravations of its guilt!

II. In what respects obedience is better than sacrifice.

1. Obedience is preferred to sacrifices, as they were uncommanded, free, and voluntary.
2. As they were false and hypocritical.
3. As they are dead and formal.
4. As they are misplaced and unreasonable. (Luke xiii. 14-16.)

III. Practical improvement.

1. Learn the great characters of acceptable obedience,—Implicit—Impartial—Universal.
2. The true notion of obedience is inconsistent with the notion of merit.
3. Learn the great defects of our obedience.
4. Study daily the necessity of obedience to God, and take particular notice of the principle from which it flows.

DR WITHERSPOON, 1768.

“THOU ART THE MAN.”

2 SAMUEL xii. 7.—“And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.”

The testimony of the Holy Spirit to the genuineness of David's piety is happily so explicit, that while we

employ his acknowledged guilt for purposes of warning and instruction, we shall find no room for uncharitable censures or harsh suspicions. [Illustrate by quotations.]

Consider I. The fidelity of the prophet.

Consider II. The directness of the accusation.

Consider III. The submission of the penitent.

I. The fidelity of Nathan.—The commission entrusted to him was one that required no ordinary amount of intrepidity and heroism. An uncourtly task to reprove a monarch's sin. Moses and Pharaoh; Samuel and Saul; Elijah and Ahab; Jeremiah and Jehoiakim; Daniel and Belshazzar, are illustrations of the same uncompromising courage in the Hebrew prophets. Under what circumstances the word of the Lord came to Nathan we are not informed, nor of the emotions he experienced in contemplation of his task. Doubtless he felt some reluctance. He had mourned the mischief wrought in Israel by the king's foul misdeeds; lingered about the precincts of the palace, but received no summons to the royal councils. He marks the royal visage, but discerns no contrition. At length all hesitation is cast aside. He girds up his loins, and arms himself with the prophetic ægis, "Thus saith the Lord." How prudently he lays siege to the royal heart! Gentle reproofs, but solid reasonings; soft words, but hard arguments, are clothed in the delicate recital. Zeal prudent and circumspect, courageous and intrepid.

II. The directness of the accusation.—Attention is arrested, interest excited, indignation against sin awakened, and then without reserve the accusation thrust right home to the guilty heart, "Thou art the man."

1. Conscience is to be aroused from its long repose.
2. Promises are to be individually applied, and warnings personal.
3. We preach in the midst of numbers to individuals.

4. Self love and besetting sins seclude men from the truth till it comes with Divine power. "Thou art the man."

III. The submission of the penitent: "And David said, I have sinned against the Lord."

1. His confession is open.
2. Contrite.
3. It has regard to God.
4. It terminates in practical, sincere resolutions.

Conclusion:—We are all sinners like David. We are all reproved, as he was, by Word of God, ministers of God, conscience. Are we penitent like him?

EDITOR.

THE YOUNG ADMONISHED.

1 KINGS xviii. 12.—"I fear the Lord from my youth."

These are the words of Obadiah. He appears to have been a person of some distinction, for "he was the governor of Ahab's house." But what we admire in him is the piety that marked his character. "He feared the Lord *greatly*." He gave evidence of it in a season of extreme danger. "For he took a hundred prophets," &c. And as his religion was superior in its degree, so it was early in its commencement.

I. We shall consider youth as the most favourable season in which to commence a religious course.

1. It presents the fewest obstacles.
2. It is the most honourable period for this purpose.
3. It is the most profitable: at no other period can we begin so advantageously.

II. The beneficial influence of early piety over the remainder of your days.

It will have a good influence over your bodies; your secular concerns. It will secure from dangers to which you are exposed in a season of life the most perilous. It

will be beneficial in forming connexions and establishing plans for life. Its influence will be happy in your spiritual progress and pleasure. It will be of unspeakable advantage in the calamities of life. It will bless old age.

III. The consequences of procrastination. Make two suppositions:—

1. That after all your delay, you obtain repentance. Allowing the hope to be well founded, nothing can be more unreasonable than delay. There are four circumstances of peculiar aggravation in a late repentance: (1.) Singular abuse of Divine goodness. (2.) Multitude of evil to be reviewed. (3.) Injury done to others. (4.) The uncertainty attending it.
2. Suppose—and this is far more probable—that after delay you do not obtain it.

W. JAY.

THE DANGER OF MUCH WORLDLY BUSINESS.

1 KINGS xx. 40.—“And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.”

Introduction:—The circumstances which gave rise to the mission of the prophet, and the explanation of his parable. [Vindicate the strongly figurative language he used, from the difficulty of reaching the ear of Ahab, and the custom of the East.] Consider,—

- I. The extreme brevity of seasons of spiritual advantage.
 - II. The difficulties and dangers against which we have to guard, if we would not sacrifice them.
 - III. The appalling losses we may sustain through a solitary act of negligence.
- I. The extreme brevity, &c.—Shortness of life—illustrate by metaphors of Scripture. Life, as the commencement of eternity, everything; in competition

with eternity, nothing. Danger of procrastination. Importance of every opportunity of spiritual instruction.

II. The difficulties and dangers, &c.

1. The absorbing character of worldly business.
2. Liable to neglect chief ends of existence for inferior pursuits.
3. Much devotedness to world disqualifies for spiritual services.
4. Positive losses of religious privilege accrue from multitude of engagements.

III. Appalling losses we may sustain, &c. — Great business of Satan is to draw off men from care of the soul. One act of indiscretion may, in the things of this life, involve years of repentance; but one neglect of the soul may be the cause of its everlasting ruin. "Oh that thou hadst known, at least in this *thy day*," &c.

1. Cultivate spirit of contrition over past indifference.
2. "Use all diligence to make your calling and election sure."

EDITOR.

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ.

1 CHRONICLES iv. 9, 10. — "And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."

Like a star set in the darkness of midnight, more brilliant through the surrounding obscurity, is the name of a great man in the chronicles of the trifling and the insignificant. This, which is true of all who have distinguished themselves by moral greatness, is more im-

pressive when the exaltation is that of religion, the only elevation that can impart true sublimity to human character.—Lot in Sodom; Joseph in Egypt; Caleb and Joshua amidst the Israelitish revolvers; Paul alone in Athens; the Saints in Cæsar's palace. There are many families like that of Elimelech in Moab, many houses with but one Abijah—solitary missionaries dwelling amidst heathen abominations—Christian artizans sorely tried by infidel associates, and poor saints compelled to dwell in corrupt localities; all these are like Jabez, more honourable than their brethren. If any man love God, the same is known of him.

I. The concise memoir.

II. The comprehensive prayer.

III. The complete answer.

I. The concise memoir.—Our text is all that inspiration has spared from oblivion of the memory of Jabez. The right use of words admits not of their waste; and when the Holy Spirit dictates, words become volumes. "A man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost"—"Apollos approved in Christ"—"He was a burning and a shining light"—"Jesus wept,"—are histories whose expansion would fill a library. The house of Aharhel was of the tribe of Judah, and its sons were princes in Israel. He of that kin whose biography we consider was "more honourable than his brethren," though with a less honourable name. His mother had anticipated the hour of anguish with an unusual sadness, and she called him Jabez, "Grief," as Rachel did Benoni, the son of her sorrow. Many a son has been welcomed into the world with gladness, who has been at last a lamentation; while, like Jabez, not a few have been anticipated with needless regrets. Though the family of Jabez were all of the seed-royal, he is exalted beyond his brethren by a title from heaven—a child of God, having received the

adoption of sons. This honour have all the saints, &c., &c.

II. The comprehensive prayer.—The life of this good man is recorded for the sake of preserving his prayer. We have no deeds of prowess, no mighty achievements, but one prayer, out of many which he offered. And what a prayer it is!—it contains four petitions, each full of holy, ardent, spiritual desire.

1. He seeks the best blessings: "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!" He is not content to receive ordinary mercies,—corn and wine and oil,—nor to receive mercies in an ordinary way. His must be sealed with tokens of Divine love. David would be blessed indeed when he prayed, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me." Jacob was blessed indeed when God said, "In blessing I will bless thee." "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich," &c. He is blessed indeed who enjoys the love of God, a knowledge of salvation, the indwelling of God's Spirit, communing with heaven now, and anticipations of entering it hereafter. It matters not so much *what* God gives us, as *how* he gives it. To have riches, honour, estates, without his favour, these are a curse indeed; to have sickness, adversity, distress, with his favour, are blessings indeed.
2. He prays that God would enlarge his coast. This may be either a petition for temporal or for spiritual possessions. It is not improbable that the grief of his mother at his birth was caused by the fact that the inheritance was exhausted. A prayer for worldly good in the spirit of Jabez becomes a spiritual one. As a supplication for the soul, every grace-taught man can adopt this petition, Rescue me from spiritual bondage, extend the field of gracious knowledge, enlarge my sphere of usefulness.
3. He entreats a consciousness of the Divine presence: "That thine hand." This supports us, directs us, supplies us, disciplines us, protects us.
4. A protest against sin: "That thou wouldest keep me

from evil," &c. To be grieved at sin is a feature of genuine Christianity. It grieves a believer because it dishonours God. Wherever he sees it, it is offensive, most of all in his own heart. This casts a new light upon the name of Jabez—"Grieved at sin."

III. The complete answer: "God granted," &c.

God does not always give us that which we ask. Mercy is as much to be seen in refusing, as in granting our desires. And yet if we ask in faith, watching with prayer, we shall find a gracious correspondence between petitions and blessings.

The subject teaches us how to pray, and what to pray for.

EDITOR.

THE REST OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

1 CHRONICLES xxiii. 25.—"For David said, The Lord God of Israel hath given rest unto his people."

In these simple words we may truly say, that the peculiar and pre-eminent gift which religion promises to confer, is in a symbolical form set before us. The rest which David here congratulates his land on attaining, prefigures deeper realities; it speaks to us of that rest which the whole creation naturally "groaneth and travaileth for;" of that rest which our God hath ever proclaimed as the attribute of his own mighty essence, and the exclusive blessing of his eternal kingdom. The king of Israel felicitates his subjects on their happy privilege of living under the shadow of the Most High—but he had brighter hopes of rest than any national prosperity could ever answer. Besides these holy aspirations of this monarch, it is impossible not to feel that the whole mass of the Old Testament language, in describing national favours, points to higher and better graces.

- I. In the mysterious polity of the people of Israel, spiritual and temporal blessings were so closely allied, that the same language might be employed to signify either. Living under the direct government of God,—with perceptions of immediate agency of God,—and taught in the law, the pure moral nature of the divine governor—the holy and meditative among them, must have felt that their ordinances were types. Epistle to Hebrews especially designed to unfold symbolism of Old Testament. It shows that God spake in a dialect of events as well as a dialect of ceremonies. Fourth chapter treats of the “rest” of the Israelites, and shows that to be typical of the believer’s repose on Christ.
- II. It is probable that David insinuated greater truths than lie on the surface of the text. The pious king had just organized all the offices of divine worship. Change and unsettlement was about to give place to permanence and repose. The ark was to be fixed on Jerusalem. What was the full extent of his prophetic vision of the future, impossible to say. To the national Israel, “rest” was not long continued, but it was only denied that an everlasting rest might be secured to his spiritual people.
- III. To secure this spiritual rest ought to be the chief object of existence. Christ the Mediator is the link that binds us to the centre of everlasting happiness. He is the true answer to all the discontents that harass and afflict us.
- IV. Rest and peace must fall upon a really Christian spirit:—
1. From its devoted imitation of Christ’s pure and perfect example.
 2. The singleness of its object.
 3. From the nature of the Christian affections.
 4. To support and exalt us, heaven must mingle with earth.

ARCHER BUTLER.

GOD'S PRESENCE WITH A PEOPLE.

2 CHRONICLES xv. 2.—“The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.”

I. What was the happiness which they enjoyed?

II. The condition upon which they held it?

I. What was the, &c.: “The Lord is with you.”

The presence of God, in his covenant of grace with any people, is the greatest glory and happiness they can enjoy. This may be demonstrated both by Scripture and by Reason. It includes:—1. The owning them as his own people. 2. Assisting and prospering them in all things. 3. Protecting them from all enemies.

II. The condition upon, &c.: “While ye be with him.”

1. The duration of this happiness.

2. Its degree.

3. God will be with his people, their glory, portion, prosperity, and protection, just as they are with him.

To be with God is not merely to bear his name, to be called his people, to draw near to him in external performances; it is to be a consecrated people—to be true worshippers—to be engaged in his service.

STEPHEN MARSHALL, 1640.

THE EYES OF THE LORD.

2 CHRONICLES xvi. 9.—“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”

I. The description of Providence.

II. The design of Providence.

I. The description.—“Eyes of the Lord” in Scripture signify:—

1. His knowledge.
2. His providence. (1.) The immediateness of providence—His own eyes. (2.) Its celerity and speed. (3.) Its extent. (4.) Its diligence. (5.) Its efficacy.

II. The design of Providence: “To show himself strong,” &c.

1. He has strong understanding, and wisdom to contrive.
2. Strong affections to love.
3. Strong words to cheer and fortify.
4. A strong arm to exert almighty power.

The persons for whom: those who are truly gracious and sincere.

J. RYLAND, SEN., 1750.

UZZIAH'S SIN.

2 CHRONICLES xxvi. 15, 16.—“And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.”

It is hard to say whether of the two is the greatest evil—prosperity, or adversity. If prosperity is more pleasing to man, adversity is often more profitable. One gives pain, and the other gives satisfaction; but the satisfaction often becomes afterwards a source of bitterness, and the pain a spring of true comfort and peace. To deny that adversity is an evil, and prosperity a good, would be equally foolish, unscriptural, and unnatural. Both may be perverted, and both improved. Since, then, they are so equally balanced, the true wisdom of man is to content himself with making no choice between them, but to acquiesce in either as

it seems good in the eyes of your heavenly Father. Unsanctified afflictions are among the common things in human history; the cases of abused prosperity are comparatively rare.

I. An example of extraordinary prosperity.

II. An instance of foolish presumption.

III. A solemn case of retribution.

I. An example of extraordinary prosperity: "He was marvellously helped."

1. The character of Uzziah.

2. His position of power and prosperity.

3. The secret of his success.

II. His foolish presumption. Nature of his sin—pride; ingratitude; contempt of that great truth which permitted the kingly and priestly office to meet only in Christ; known disobedience.

III. Solemn retribution.

Improvement.

1. Learn the true source of all real prosperity.

2. The peculiar dangers of prosperity.

3. The reason why God keeps his people in a low condition.

4. Sins of presumption are the worst sins.

5. Sins of presumption lead men either to forsake worship, or to tamper with it.

6. Sorrow inevitably follows sin.

ANONYMOUS.

HEZEKIAH DESERTED.

2 CHRONICLES xxxii. 31.—"Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."

Since the ways of God are involved in profound mystery, often misunderstood, and doubts and diffi-

culties are raised in the mind distressing to ourselves, and dishonouring to God, anything which tends to show that wisdom and goodness pervade all his dispensations must comfort the believer and confirm his faith. It is the object of a great part of God's word to evince that religious experience has been in all ages uniform. It teaches us what God is doing with us, by the likeness of our own case to some others on record. Hezekiah had been marvellously recovered, &c., &c.

- I. The person.
 - II. The dispensation.
 - III. The purpose.
 - IV. The issue.
- I. The person.
 - 1. His personal character.
 - 2. His peculiar necessities.
- II. The dispensation.
 - 1. Suspension of grace.
 - 2. Withdrawment of comfort.
- III. The purpose.
 - 1. To discover sin, with a view to its cure.
 - 2. To conduct to greater happiness and honour.
- IV. The issue—he sinned.
 - 1. Wherein was the sin? He neglected an opportunity of proclaiming the true God, and indulged in a vain self-seeking.
 - 2. How small in comparison with sins of others—of ourselves!
 - 3. How soon repented of!
 - 4. How severely visited!

ANONYMOUS.

A TENDER SPIRIT.

2 CHRONICLES xxxiv. 27.—“Because thine heart was tender.”

This is God's own commendation of King Josiah. He

entered upon his reign while very young, at eight years old; and, though the son of a wicked father, was a prince eminent for religion, &c. [History of Josiah's conduct.] This Divine encomium represents an important qualification of the Christian temper, *a tender heart*. The same thing is sometimes expressed by *a heart of flesh*, in opposition to *a stony heart*.

I. Give a general account of a tender heart.

1. It implies a quick and ready sense of feeling in spiritual things (Hebrews v. 14); quickness of apprehension; ready reflections of conscience; a disposition to be easily and suitably affected.

2. A pliable disposition to yield to Divine influences.

II. The way in which such a temper should express itself.

1. In relation to the word of God.
2. In relation to sin.
3. In relation to providential events.
4. In relation to the honour of God.

III. What foundation is laid for such a temper by Christianity.

Good men in the ancient Church were not strangers to it. The recompenses of the life to come are more fully revealed. Richer discoveries of grace are made to us. Ceremonial observances have given way to substantials of religion. The softening spirit is more plentifully communicated.

IV. Inferences.

1. Discern the difference between a truly Christian temper and some things mistaken for it. It is not *natural* easiness of disposition, not *occasional* tenderness.
2. Let us all seek after and cultivate this tenderness of spirit.
3. If conscious of its possession, take the comfort of it as good evidence of a renewed and Christian state.

THE FEAR OF GOD A PRESERVATIVE FROM SIN.

NEHEMIAH v. 15.—“But so did not I, because of the fear of God.”

Men are often ready to deceive themselves with a merely negative religion; not reflecting that the law of God requires positive holiness, and active conformity to the Divine image. But, if closely examined, even upon the head of negatives, how deficient would the religion of most people appear? There is no certain preservative from evil, but the fear of God powerfully ruling in the heart.

I. What is intended by the fear of God?

It frequently stands in the Old Testament for the whole of religion. In the New Testament, faith is more commonly used. Under the former dispensation God made a fuller display of the perfections belonging to him as a *Governor*, now he has revealed more of the attributes of a *Father*. The fear of God is not a mere outward form—not a tormenting dread of punishment. An internal, reverential regard for God, arising from just views of his moral character, a conviction of his relation to us, a cordial submission to his authority, a sense of his goodness, a view of his concern to discountenance sin in the very mode of pardoning it.

II. The superior tendency of this principle to preserve from sin.

It will assuredly keep us from sin both against God and man. Inferior motives may keep from *particular* evil, this from sin in *general*; other motives may keep from sin *occasionally*, this *permanently*; other motives keep from *scandalous* offences, this from sins *excused*, or even *applauded*; other motives may keep from *open* sin, this from *secret* sin, from the very appearance of evil.

III. Application.

How are you disposed towards sin? Are you satisfied

with outward propriety, or concerned to love God supremely? Are you anxious to feel and show the influence of universal disinterested benevolence? From what sins have you been deterred by religious motives? What is there of which you can say, "So did not I, because of the fear of God."

DR RYLAND.

ESTHER AN EXAMPLE IN PRAYER.

ESTHER v. 6.—"And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed."

In all sacred history nothing is more remarkable than the manner in which God has preserved his people, and that too when they have seemed upon the verge of destruction. This grand object has been enshrined in providence from the beginning of all time, but at seasons of peril it has shone forth with conspicuous splendour. It is so in the history of God's dealings in the court of Shushan.

- I. Consider the noble conduct of Esther on this trying occasion.
 - II. The encouragement to believing prayer which the example affords.
- I. Esther's noble conduct.
 1. The cause she undertook was God's cause.
 2. The service she performed was at the peril of life.
 3. With glowing zeal she combined consummate prudence.
 - II. The encouragement to believing prayer, &c.
 1. We come into the presence, not of a tyrant, but of a kind and indulgent Father.
 2. We are not forbidden, but expressly invited to approach him.

3. While Esther had a rigid law to repress her, we have promises in our favour.
4. We have not a Haman at court opposed to us, but a heavenly friend and intercessor, to plead with us and for us.

Conclusions:—

1. God in his providence prevents the fears and exceeds the expectations of those who wait on him; especially does he exceed the desperate hopes of true penitents, who resolve, "I will go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish."
2. God must be served and honoured in the face of danger and rebuke.
3. To embark in the cause of God is to be allied to an interest certain of success.
4. If the love of life could inspire such pathetic pleadings, how much more the love of souls, both of our own and of others.

EDITOR.

THE BENEFITS OF AFFLICTION.

JOB v. 17, 18.—"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: for he maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole."

Though Eliphaz, as well as the other friends of Job, was inclined to great severity, and indulged suspicions of his sincerity, for which he had insufficient ground, and unjustly inferred his former hypocrisy from his present affliction; yet in this chapter especially he offers much good advice, and evidently admits such premises as might well have rectified his own erroneous conclusions.—The best of us would be badly off if God had not more patience with us than we have with one another.—All good men have not an equal share of

affliction, much less are all bad men exempt from it. Neither affliction, nor the want of it, will prove an interest in God's favour; but the sanctified improvement of affliction will go far towards evincing that we are his peculiar people, and truly happy. It has not been unusual for God to make use of affliction in bringing those to make him their refuge who had not before realised their need of him.

I. Men in times of prosperity are apt to indulge erroneous notions, and neglect important truths.

II. God often employs afflictions to correct our mistaken ideas, and rectify our foolish propensities.

III. When these ends are answered, he who has been most severely chastened may well think himself happy.

I. Men, &c.

As to God, themselves, other men, this world, and the world to come. They forget God's existence, his supremacy, their dependence on him, the importance of seeking reconciliation to him, and of devoting themselves to his service, the certainty of death, and responsibility to God, lie with little weight on their minds. We seldom discover a due spirit of sympathy with others, till we have tasted the cup of affliction ourselves. It is hard to affect the conscience and heart with the vanity of the world, so as to hide pride from man. Even those who have admitted such truths, need to have their impression revived.

II. God often employs, &c.

Affliction is often the means of impressing our minds with a sense of dependence upon God, and our need of his favourable regard. It reminds us of the evil of sin—the power of God's anger—the necessity of reconciliation to him—that man, at his best estate, is vanity—God can easily strip us of idolized enjoyments, or render them of no avail to our happiness. Riches make to

themselves wings, &c. The strength of the most robust is turned to weakness. Finest mental powers easily thrown into disorder. Parents of a numerous family have to leave their substance to strangers. Affliction teaches us our need of divine guidance and support—the necessity of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God—of seeking an interest in the favour he beareth to his people—and of laying up “treasure in heaven, where,” &c.

III. When these ends, &c.

It is a happy thing to be convinced that all we receive is from God—that he can continue or remove, bless or embitter it at his pleasure. That every creature is to us what God makes it, and no more. That his favour is better than life, his displeasure worse than death. To be more attentive to our best interests—worth of the soul—importunate for the blessings of salvation—a title to eternal life and meetness for God's heavenly kingdom. To be obliged to make constant applications to the throne of grace. To be kept from idolizing the world, and to be constrained to make glorifying God our chief business.

DR RYLAND.

THE AGED SAINT'S READINESS FOR DEATH AND GLORY.

JOB v. 26.—“Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season.”

I. Why the saints of God may be compared to *corn*.

II. Why they resemble a *shock* of corn.

III. What is designed by their “coming to the grave in a full age, like,” &c.

I. Why the saints of God, &c.

1. Corn is precious and profitable.

2. It must die before it can bring forth fruit.
3. It is the subject of growth.
4. It is nourished and ripened by heavenly influences.

II. Why do they resemble, &c.

1. The variety of their graces.
2. Their maturity.

III. What is designed by their coming, &c.

1. They have filled up the measure of human life.
2. The gentleness and ease of their dismissal by death.
3. The joy with which they are removed from the world.

Application.

1. Let us be concerned that the comparison apply to us
2. Let us be reconciled to the loss of departed saints.

THOMAS GIBBONS, 1762

THE HAND OF GOD IN AFFLICTIONS.

JOB ix. 12.—“Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?”

It appears from this passage, that in the losses of life we are to recognise and acknowledge:—

I. The truth of God's agency : “He taketh away.”

II. The uncontrollableness of his dominion : “Who can hinder him.”

III. The unimpeachableness of his conduct : “Who will say unto him, What doest thou?”

I. The truth of his agency.—Wealth is often taken away—health, reason, connections, and relations. Who is the disposer? His interposition is not visible. It is necessary to rise above sense, and call in the aid of faith.

II. The uncontrollableness, &c.—Can the man of power?

Can the man of policy? Can the man of prayer? Can the hearer?—the wife?—the children?—the lover? Can the husband? Can parents?

III. The unimpeachableness of his conduct, &c.—To restrain such a disposition there is necessary :—

1. A conviction of his supremacy
2. A conviction of his rectitude.
3. A conviction of his wisdom.

Must we be kept in absolute ignorance and silence while God is dealing with us thus?

1. You would not be often capable of understanding the subject, even were God to tell you what he doeth.
2. There may be useful reasons for withholding from you the degree of knowledge which you are competent to receive.
3. An appointed hour is approaching when the restraints you are now under will be taken off ; and your inquiries will be fully allowed and indulged.
4. Some inquiry is permitted you even now.

As any of your comforts may be taken away, set not your hearts upon them. We see what only it is in our afflictions that can reconcile the mind to them.

W. JAY.

THE GREAT CHANGE.

JOB xiv. 14.—“All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.”

I. Man's time in this world is an appointed time.

II. A change will come, and put an end to this time.

III. To be waiting for this change is the practice of the saints, and would be the wisdom of all.

I. Man's time is an appointed time.

1. Speak concerning this time. It is continually passing. It is a time of sojourning. It is said to be lived in the flesh. It is the accepted time—once ended, it will no more be granted.
 2. By whom man's time is appointed. Time is in the hand and power of none but God. He orders it for special uses. It expires at his pleasure.
 3. To what end it is appointed. Time is appointed for seeking—For making peace—For conversion and healing—For working—For warring—To make provision for eternity—To render final impenitence inexcusable.
- USES:—1. Acknowledge the kindness of God. 2. Admire the lasting of time. 3. Comply with God's design in the gift. Remember that its limits are unknown.

II. A change will come, &c.

1. In what respects death may be called a change. (a) In reference to sinners—their outward comforts—their outward man—their peace and confidence—the possibility of salvation—the patience exercised towards them. (b) In reference to saints,—they change their habitation—they are present with the Lord—they exchange ignorance for knowledge—Incomplete grace for sinless purity—from war and labour to rest and triumph—from all manner of sorrow to fulness of joy.
 2. That death will certainly come. It is merited by sin. It is appointed. Christ does not deliver his own from the stroke, though he does from the sting of death.
 3. That time comes to an end when this change comes. The eternal rewards received by the righteous. The everlasting punishment inflicted upon the wicked.
- USES:—1. See the vanity of temporal things. 2. How vain ourselves are. 3. Remain not under the guilt of sin. Think it not strange when friends are removed.

III. To be waiting for this change, &c.

What it is to wait? Firm belief that it will come. Daily expectation of it. Preparation for its coming, having the state changed; the heart changed; the life changed; and a saving change evidenced. Desiring it
Patience of heart.

2. Why the saints wait for this change? Because of its certainty. The spiritual advantage is great. The misery of being unprepared is inconceivable.

USES:—1. A reproof to those who do not think of death.

2. Exhortation:—Imitate holy Job. Look to Christ to take out the sting of death. To be freed from bondage and fear of death.

NATH. VINCENT, 1682.

SIN AN INFINITE EVIL.

JOB xxii. 5.—“Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?”

A very strange question to put to such a man as Job! A man of exemplary piety, whom the Scriptures describe as perfect; who was so eminent, that when Satan appears before the Lord he is pointed at as a wonder; and who is a model of suffering patience to this day. But then Eliphaz saw him in deep affliction, and brought to the lowest degree of misery, he thought some sin must be the cause, and therefore he says, “Though you have been so very admirable before men, are you not a hypocrite? God afflicts you because you are guilty. The best thing you can do is to repent and confess. Come now, ‘Is not thy wickedness,’” &c. Thus we see the best of men may be misunderstood and improperly judged; for men are always ready to think other men’s sins greater than their own. They see a mote in their brother’s eye better than a beam in their own.

I. What constitutes the greatness of sin?

II. How may it be said to be infinite?

III. What should be the effect of such truths upon us?

I. What constitutes, &c.—All sin is great. None but

fools make a mock of it. It must be great, for it requires the blood of Christ to atone for it. But some sins may be regarded as specially great:—

1. When committed against light and knowledge.
2. When committed in the face of many mercies.
3. When continued in, after reproof, warning, and admonition.
4. When we sin against our own promises, resolutions, and professions.
5. When we sin again, after repentance.

II. How may it be said to be infinite?

1. In a common acceptation of the word ; when it exceeds all ordinary bounds.
2. As committed against an Infinite Being.
3. In respect to the incalculable number of sins.
4. With regard to the will of him who commits it.—It arises from unspeakable depravity—Unsearchable depths in the human heart.

III. What effect, &c.

1. How much do we need to exercise repentance !
2. How necessary is the infinite atonement of Christ !
3. What an unspeakable blessing is forgiveness !
4. How great is our need of regenerating and sanctifying grace !

ANONYMOUS.

MARKING THE WAYS OF MEN.

JOB xxii. 15-17.—“Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden ? which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood ? which said unto God, Depart from us ; and what can the Almighty do for them ?”

Observation I. The way of wickedness is *an old way*, but not *the oldest*.

II. The way of God with incorrigible sinners has always been the same.

III. None are so high and strong as to be beyond the reach of Divine judgments: "Cut down," *i. e.* as a tree felled.

IV. The judgments of God are often very sudden: "Out of time," *i. e.*, ripe for judgment, before ripe in years.

V. Fancied security is often violently and completely overthrown: "Foundation was overflown."

VI. The presence of God is a trouble to wicked men: "Depart from us."

I. It is a great advantage to mark the way:—The conduct, characters, and issues of men. It is so whether they be good or bad; here the wicked, in many other cases in Scripture the righteous are held up to observation: "Mark the perfect man," &c.

II. Some directions for profitable observation of the ways and issues of men.

1. Let all be brought to bear upon a better knowledge of God. (a) Observe the accordance, or non-accordance of their way, with the will and word of God. (b) Regard all that befalls them, either in present good or ultimate judgment, as the dealings of God with them.
2. Let all your observations of men be turned to personal application and practical account. (a) Never lose sight of the fact, that all the evil developed in them exists in you as to the seed; and so, all the graces of good men you are capable of. (b) Set up their sin and doom as so many beacons for your own admonition and warning. (c) Before you prefer yourselves to them, or indulge in unmeasured condemnation, examine whether there are not extenuating circumstances in their case not present in your own, *e. g.*, less light—stronger temptations.
3. Compare the state, strength, character, and issues of wicked men with those of the righteous, so as to judge which is preferable.

- (a) Compare the supposed strong foundations of prosperous sinners with the strong foundations of the righteous.
- (b) Compare the good and evil which attend both in their course and end.
- (c) Compare the way of each.

ANONYMOUS.

ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD.

JOB xxii. 21.—“ Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace : thereby good shall come unto thee.”

I. What this acquaintance with God is ?

It implies knowledge of God—Near access to him—Familiar converse with him—Mutual communications—Affectionate love.

II. That it is the duty of man to acquaint himself with God.

1. Naturally he is estranged, but by Jesus he is restored.
2. It is the highest improvement of existence.
3. It is the greatest of mercies.
4. Without it we are in a state of sin and misery.
5. Because God acquaints himself with man.

III. Motives to enforce this exhortation.

1. From character of God.—He is the most loving and kind friend. The most cheering friend. The most powerful friend. Most active. Most condescending. Most faithful. Richest. Most sympathising. Most patient. Most honourable. Most suitable. Wisest. Immortal. Present. He is a soul friend. A necessary friend. A tried friend. An everlasting friend. He is willing and desirous to make your friendship.
2. The glorious effects of this acquaintance.—It makes the soul humble. It preserves from sin. It gives low thoughts of the world. It cures all sorrows. It

increases our honour of God. It quickens the soul.
It imparts patience, wisdom, likeness to God.

3. The danger of refusing.
4. The examples of those who have been acquainted with God.
5. The promises of the text, "peace" and "good."

IV. Directions to obtain acquaintance with God.

1. Get a thorough sense of estrangement from him.
2. Get a humble heart.
3. Visit God often. Prayer. Ordinances. Reading. Meditation.
4. Take Christ with you when you go to God.
5. Make acquaintance with God's friends.
6. Seek it earnestly—speedily.
7. Beware of all that places distance between God and you.

JAMES JANEWAY, 1669.

JOB'S DESIRE AFTER GOD; AND HIS DOCTRINE OF PRAYER.

JOB xxiii. 3, 4.—"Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments."

Affliction has made many of the saints eminent, just as darkness gives splendour to the stars; and in nothing has it been more conspicuously blessed to them than in this, causing them to find that delight in God which they have lost in all besides. He who uttered the words of the text has stood out to all ages as a striking example of suffering, and an eminent pattern of patience. Always excepting him who "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," there probably never was such an instance of accumulated affliction and successful endurance. Divine grace had evidently made Job a match

for the great adversary in the terrible encounter. The Sabæans strip him of his oxen—the lightning of his sheep, &c., &c.—and yet in the face of all these reverses he possesses his soul in patience—maintains his innocence—justifies his Maker and rejoices in his Redeemer, until at length he is made as much a mirror of the Divine bounty, as he had been before of the extent to which it is possible for man to endure privation, pain, and peril.

I. The desire expressed.

II. The resolution formed.

I. The desire, &c. It may spring—

1. From imperfection of evangelical knowledge.—Times of Job. No open vision. Few means of grace. Religious privilege limited.
2. From providential obscurity.
3. From darkness and desertion of soul.
4. From spirit of contrition seeking pardon.
5. From earnest desires of a gracious soul after intimate communion with God.

II. The resolution formed. These words describe the construction of a well-ordered prayer.

1. Why does God require argument in prayer?—To promote fervour. That prayer may be preserved from degenerating into lifeless form. That faith may be strengthened by a view of the motives by which God is urged to bless.
2. Some efficacious arguments.—The merits and intercession of Christ. The promises of God. Precedents from history and experience. Sufferings and necessities.
3. The invariable success of believing prayer.

Conclusion:—Let prayer be well-ordered—prepared—argumentative. In all darkness and distress fly to God alone.

EDITOR.

E

THE DEPTH OF GOD'S WAYS.

JOB xxvi. 14.—“Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him?”

I. The proofs of the doctrine that the ways of God are inscrutable.

II. The reasons why God reveals so small a portion of his ways.

I. The proofs, &c.

1. In the works of Nature.
2. The conduct of Providence.
3. The mysteries of Religion.
4. His dealings with the Church.

Application:—

1. Our ignorance of the ways of God should inspire profound reverence.
2. It should teach us to be extremely cautious in the decisions we arrive at in judging of his works, and his dealings with men.
3. It should lead us to acquiesce in the mysteries of Revelation.

II. The reasons, &c.

1. His sovereignty and our dependence.
2. The disproportion between his knowledge and ours.
3. The prejudices which obscure our sight.
4. The nature of religion: “We walk by faith,” &c.
5. The contrast between the present economy and that which is to come.

HENRI CHATELAIN.

THE FUTURE RESIGNED TO GOD.

JOB xxxiv. 33.—“Should it be according to thy mind?”

I. Some errors reproved.

II. Doctrines established.

III. Consolations supplied.

I. Errors reprovèd:—

1. A desire to choose for ourselves.
2. A disposition to murmur at our earthly lot.
3. Envy at the circumstances of others.
4. Confidence in our own judgment.

II. Doctrines to be established:—

1. The absolute sovereignty of God.
2. The universal extent of his holy Providence.

III. Consolations supplied:—

1. Faithfulness of Divine promises.
2. Comfort of submission to Divine will.
3. Certainty of final perfection of all believers in Divine presence.

EDITOR.

A VIEW OF GOD'S GLORY HUMBLING TO THE SOUL.

JOB xlii. 5, 6.—“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

It is not improbable, from the beginning of the thirty-eighth chapter, that it pleased God to give Job some visible representation of his glory and omnipotence. This was not unusual in ancient times, before the canon of Scripture was closed. But no doubt the discovery which chiefly affected him was inward and spiritual, carrying home with irresistible force the great truths which we still find recorded in a manner inimitably noble and sublime. The words present to us this general and most important truth: That a discovery of the perfection, glory, and majesty of God, has a powerful influence in leading us to repentance; and that the clearer this discovery is, the deeper will be our humility, and the more sincere our repentance.

I. Illustrate and confirm the proposition, that clear

discoveries of God lead to repentance. This truth will hold equally certain in whatever way the discovery is made. It is of great force as applying to the manifestations of God's glory by the Gospel. The discovery in question must be spiritual and internal—not speculative.

1. It brings to light the hidden evils of the heart.
2. It points out the evil of sin—its aggravations—and strips of all excuses.
3. It points out the danger of sin.
4. It sets forth God's infinite mercy.

II. Practical improvement.

1. Learn the force of those passages of Scripture in which religion is described as the "knowledge of God."
2. The great danger of a state of ignorance.
3. See the necessity of regeneration.
4. Observe, that as men grow in religion, they grow in humility.

DR WITHERSPOON, 1765.

CHRIST'S GOVERNMENT IN, AND OVER HIS PEOPLE.

PSALM ii. 6.—"Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."

- I. Jesus Christ is, by the designation of the Father, a King, to rule and govern all whom he hath redeemed.
 1. Jesus Christ reigns *in* us.—Giving his people laws of life—working grace in their hearts—imparting new supplies of the sacred Spirit—purifying their hearts—creating inward peace and comfort.
 2. Jesus Christ reigns *over* us.—Subduing all enemies—bestowing all blessings—sanctifying all conditions—settling all ecclesiastical polity.

Let God's people comfort themselves in the fact that Jesus reigns. Subjection to Christ is honourable—

profitable—necessary. Subjects of this great King should live in harmony and sympathy one with another. Good subjects will advance his government in their own hearts and in others!

II. The kingdom of Jesus Christ shall be firmly established, notwithstanding all opposition.

There are three kingdoms opposed to it—Sin, Satan, Antichrist. He prevents opposition and counteracts plots. He makes inward temptations means of improving the graces of his people. His gospel spreads, notwithstanding adversaries. Providence favours it. The state of the Church is apparently fluctuating—really progressive. Jesus can plant his sceptre where no earthly king can set his foot.

THOMAS TEMPLE, D.D., 1642.

TRUST IN GOD.

PSALM xiii. 5.—“But I have trusted in thy mercy.”

I. The nature of this important duty.

II. The motives to its exercise.

I. The nature of trust in God.

1. It is an *enlightened* confidence.
2. A *universal* confidence.
3. It is a *holy* confidence.

II. The motives, &c.

1. The infinite wisdom of God.
2. His almighty power.
3. His boundless goodness.

How miserable those who have no trust in God! Wise and happy the subjects of this trust. (Jeremiah xvii. 5–8.)

F. J. DURAND.

THE FOLLY OF ATHEISM.

PSALM xiv. 1.—“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”

I. An assertion made: “There is no God.”

II. The person by whom it is made: “The fool.”

I. An assertion, &c.

1. The thing asserted. Which may be understood, (1.) Of an absolute removal of the Divine Being and Existence; or, (2.) Of a removal of God's providence, by which he governs and takes account of all the particular affairs of this world, and more especially of the lives and actions of men.
2. The manner of the assertion: “In his heart.” It wears the badge of guilt, privacy, and darkness. By this may be implied:—
 - (1.) An inward wishing that there was no God.
 - (2.) His seeking out arguments to persuade himself that there is none.
 - (3.) A marvellous readiness to acquiesce in any seeming probability, or appearance of reason, that may make for his opinion.
 - (4.) Another way different from all the former, for a man to place his sole dependence, as to his chief good and happiness, on anything beside God, is virtually to say in his heart, “There is no God.”

II. The person, &c. Whose folly will appear from the following reasons:—

1. That in making and holding this assertion, he contradicts the general judgment and notion of mankind.
2. That he lays aside a principle, easy and suitable to reason, and substitutes in the room of it, one strange and harsh, and, at the best, highly improbable.
3. His folly appears from the causes, and motives inducing him to take up this opinion. (1.) Great impiety, and disquiet of conscience consequent thereupon. (2.) Great ignorance of nature and natural causes.
4. From those cases, in which such persons begin to doubt, waver, and fly off from their opinion. (1.) In the time of

some great and imminent danger. (2.) In the time of approaching death.

Application. Beware—

1. Of great and crying sins, which make the conscience raw and sick.
2. Of discontent about the cross passages of God's providence.
3. Of devotedness to pleasure and sensuality, there being nothing in the world which casts God out of the heart like this.

DR SOUTH.

DEATH NO BAR TO A BELIEVER'S HAPPINESS.

PSALM xvii. 15.—“I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

I. The *time* of a believer's complete happiness:
“When I awake.”

II. The *measure* of it: “I shall be *satisfied*.”

III. The *object* of it: “With thy *likeness*.”

I. The time, &c.

1. Death is to the godly no more than a sleep.—Sleep is only obstructive, not destructive to the faculties—some earlier than others—waking out of both sleep and death effected by voice.

Let this moderate grief at the loss of departed Christians. How necessary to exercise faith and holiness, that death may be a comfortable sleep.

2. The happiness of believers is not absolute and entire until their resurrection. They already have life and eternal blessedness, in purchase, in promise, in their forerunner and proxy, in the first-fruits. However, God defers the consummation of their happiness,—

- (1.) That he may hide his purposes concerning his children from the world.
- (2.) That he may shew the greatness of his power.
- (3.) That they may exercise all kinds of grace to his glory.
- (4.) That their entrance to glory may be conformable to that of Jesus.

(5.) That he may declare himself first in his threatenings.
How needful a grace is patience.

The postponement of final bliss is no barrier to diligence.

II. The measure, &c.

1. Comparatively. 2. Positively. 3. Its properties.

Compare it, (1.) To the best of earthly things.

(2.) With the sorest afflictions they have had on earth.

(3.) With the joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit.

2. Positively.

(1.) In the efficient cause.

(2.) In the meritorious cause.

(3.) The exemplary cause.

(4.) The object.

(5.) The final cause.

3. Its properties.

(1.) It is happiness incorruptible.

(2.) It is undefiled.

(3.) It fadeth not away.

This should take off the edge of all earthly happiness.

How great their folly who prefer transient pleasures.

III. The object, &c.

Beholding God's face.

WILLIAM SPURSTOWE, D.D., 1656.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF FORGIVENESS.

PSALM xxxii. 1.—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

Question I. Wherein the blessedness of forgiveness doth appear.

1. God doth pronounce them so in the text.

2. Because they are delivered from the greatest evil.

3. Because they are taken into covenant with God—into God's favour—God's family—under God's providence—They have free access to God in prayer—They have communion with God in all his ordinances.

4. They are in a better state than Adam was in his first creation.
5. Because they shall be blessed: (1.) The future blessedness which the pardoned shall have in the blessed and glorious place where they shall live, in the blessed and glorious company which they shall converse with—Saints, Angels, the Holy Ghost, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father. In the blessed and glorious state they shall attain to, a state of peace, of wealth and pleasure, of honour and dignity, of holiness and purity, of perfect happiness and glory in soul and body. (2.) Prove that pardoned persons shall assuredly attain this future blessedness:—From God's election, God's covenant and promise, from their union to Christ, from their right of justification and adoption, the certainty of their perseverance in grace. (3.) Shew how the future blessedness renders them blessed while on earth:—They have a right of it, they have hopes of it, they have foretastes and first-fruits of it, in the work of grace upon their hearts, and through the witness, seal, and earnest of the Spirit.

Question II. How this blessedness of forgiveness may be attained.

1. Some things must be believed:—The doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, and of justification by the righteousness of Christ.
2. Some things must be done:—They must get conviction of sin; they must make confession of sin; they must by faith make application of Jesus Christ; they must forsake sin; they must make supplication and earnest prayer unto God for pardoning mercy; they must forgive others.

USES:—1. For reproof:—Is there such blessedness in forgiveness? Whence is it that so many of you neglect this blessedness, in the neglect of your pardon?

2. God is displeased with all the workers of iniquity, but he is most highly displeased with you that slight his mercy.
3. Let me exhort all of you that lie under the guilt of sin, to labour after this blessedness of forgiveness.

THOMAS VINCENT, M.A., 1662.

THE DIVINE GOODNESS THE FOUNDATION OF TRUST.

PSALM xxxvi. 7.—“How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.”

- I. The only foundation of trust in God is the consideration of his mercy and goodness.—Man is indigent in condition, his life a state of perpetual dependence. In a moral view, still more helpless. Separate goodness from the character of God, and there is no prospect of comfort.
 1. This goodness makes his character infinitely delightful.
 2. It makes his providence and government unspeakably desirable.
 3. It excites all the most pleasing affections of our souls.
- II. The goodness of God will justify our largest expectations, and deserves the most cheerful trust.
 1. This goodness is supreme, and supreme confidence is due to it.
 2. It is immutable, and deserves habitual trust.
 3. It is universal.
 4. It is the prevailing character in all his works.
 5. The exercise of goodness is peculiarly pleasing to God.
 6. The gospel manifests the riches of the grace of God.

Inference 1. How miserable those who put themselves out of the reach of mercy.

 2. The unreasonableness of despair under the gospel dispensation.
 3. How thankful should we be for the gospel revelation.
 4. Establish your hearts by trust in him.
- III. What is implied in putting our trust in God?
 1. The full persuasion of his loving-kindness.
 2. Complete resignation to him.
 3. Cheerful expectation of seasonable manifestations of his goodness: (a) In all lawful endeavours for support and comfort of life. (b) In cases of importance and difficulty.

(c) In circumstances of threatening and danger.

DR S. CHANDLER.

HOPE CENTRED IN GOD.

PSALM xxxix. 7.—“And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.”

- I. There is nothing in this world worthy the expectation of our souls, so as to constitute their happiness.
 1. All things here are uncertain.
 2. All things here are unsatisfying.
- II. That our hopes should be placed on God entirely, as the author of felicity.
 1. There is enough in God to fill our most enlarged expectations
 2. God is willing to grant us all the happiness we can possibly desire, in, and from him.

THOMAS GIBBONS, M.A., 1762.

THE KING OF KINGS.

PSALM xlv. 2.—“Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.”

- I. The personal excellences of Christ.
 - II. His peculiar official qualifications.
 - III. His eminent prosperity and success.
- I. The personal excellences, &c.: “Thou art fairer.”
 1. They are of a moral and mental character.
 2. They are not derived; but his own native meritorious perfections.
 - II. His peculiar official, &c.: “Grace is poured.”
 1. The doctrine he teaches, the manner in which it is conveyed to the mind, the effect it produces: all is grace.
 2. The plenitude of this possession.
 - III. His prosperity, &c.

1. It descends through him upon all his subjects.
2. It comprehends perpetual increase.
3. We must look even beyond the glory of the latter day.

D. KATTERNS.

· SACRED RECOLLECTIONS.

PSALM xlviii. 9.—“We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.”

With what impassioned ardour does the devout Psalmist always speak of the house of God!—His devotions were not restricted to the temple, but there they attained their greatest height.—If such ecstasy could be experienced amidst the types and ceremonials of Zion, how much of ardent delight and holy fervour should characterize the purer scenes of gospel worship!

I. The subject: “Loving kindness.”

II. The season: “In the midst of thy temple.”

III. The assertion: “We have thought,” &c.

I. The subject: “Loving-kindness.”—A word almost exclusively confined to the Psalms—compound word—eminently suggestive. In every instance of its use, applied to the special benignity of God to his own people. This loving-kindness is to be discerned in Providence,—multitude, variety, constancy, seasonableness of mercies. (Individual retrospect). But especially revealed in the work of salvation. “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” Divine Love—free—distinguishing—condescending—expansive—powerful—everlasting.

II. The season: “In the midst,” &c.—The scene in which knowledge is imparted—love disclosed—praise offered—affections kindled—communion realised—sacrifices presented.

III. The assertion: "We have thought."—All lively Christians are men of much thought. Holy meditation has a large office in God's worship.

1. An expression of gratitude.
2. An encouragement to confidence.
3. A motive to devotedness.

Who can think of Divine loving-kindness, and not be inflamed to Divine service? We love him because he first loved us.

EDITOR.

THE BEAUTY AND STRENGTH OF ZION.

PSALM xlviii. 12, 13, 14.—"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

I. What is to be understood by the preservation and protection of the church?

1. The eternal salvation of the church of God.
2. The preservation of the church in the world.
3. Protection in times of persecution, iniquity, and declension.

II. What is meant by searching into the causes of the church's preservation?

1. We are to look off all worldly aids.
2. Look in the book of God.

III. What are the means of the preservation of Zion?

1. The designation of Jesus Christ as King of Zion.
2. The promises of God.
3. Watchful providence.
4. God's special presence.
5. The covenant of God: "This God is our God," &c.

IV. Why should we inquire into the means of the church's preservation?

To deliver us from sinful fears, and discover to us the great mistake of the adversaries of the church.

V. What testimony are we to give to succeeding generations?

1. The exercise of faith and patience in all our trials.
2. The instruction of the young. Tell them what God hath done for the church in our days.

DR JOHN OWEN, 1650.

THE SAINTS' MOST EXCELLENT SACRIFICE.

PSALM I. 23.—“Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.”

This Psalm containeth the great *assize* arraignment of the hypocrite; in which,

I. We read the convention of the *Court*, and sitting down of the *Bench*; the Witnesses are the whole earth; which is called from East to West, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. The *place* is “out of Zion, the perfection of beauty.” The *guard and executioners*, “a fire shall devour before him,” &c. The *assistants*, heaven and earth. The *Judge*, Jehovah, and the *summoned delinquents or malefactors*, visible saints, and sacrificing covenanters.

II. The *process* or proceedings upon them; and these are of two sorts:—

1. The Lord's own people—his Israel. They had sincere hearts, but were too carnal in leaning upon bodily exercises and outward duties of religion—“Bullocks and he-goats”—to these he hath two words: (1.) A reproof of their too carnal and extrinsical services. (2.) He exhorts them to real, spiritual service, viz.: The oblation of praise—the payment of vows—the prayer of faith.

"Offer to God thanksgiving." This is no work for hypocrites. "Pay thy vows to the Most High." The hypocrite is as forward in promising as any, but he gives nothing but promises. "Call upon me in the day of trouble." Herein also the hypocrite will quickly tire, if he doth begin at all.

2. The wicked, inwardly ; and yet a kind of professors. They "declare his statutes," &c., though in real practice they are wide enough ; for they are "haters of instruction," and "they cast his words behind them." Thus rotten at the core, it is not long before they violate the second Table—"They consent with the thief"—"partake with adulterers"—"give their mouths to evil"—"frame deceit with their tongues," &c., &c.

III. The verdict and sentence upon the whole matter, which is also twofold:—

1. A censure of terror to the last and worst sort of delinquents, in case they continue in their impenitency. "Now consider this, ye that forget God," &c.
2. A cordial promise to the former and better sort of the arraigned, if they return to real duty, and a well-ordered way. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me," &c.

Observation I. Thanksgiving to God is a very glorious and transcendent service.

Consider 1. Its comprehensiveness and perfection. It is the confluence of all other duties. It is commanded in all cases.

2. It is glorious in respect of its actors and subject.
3. In respect of its special ends and effects.
4. It is transcendent for its largeness and extent. "In every thing give thanks," &c.

Observation II. Right ordering of the way is the top-stone of all duty, and the corner-stone of all deliverance. It consists in—

1. A putting of things into due place.
2. A fixing of them there. "Beholding your order and steadfastness."

JOHN BOND, 1648.

THE SINNER CLEANSED.

PSALM li. 7.—“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

I. That which David desired.

II. The means by which it was to be accomplished.

I. David's desire.

We must consider him,—

1. As a Penitent.
2. As a King.
3. As a Prophet.

II. The means, &c.

1. Hyssop was the ordinary means of sacred purification under the law.
2. Observe the necessity for two things: one, the blood into which the hyssop was to be dipped; the other, the branch by which it was sprinkled.
3. Remark the manner of its application. The branch used must be hyssop only, it must be tied with scarlet linen, and fastened to the end of a staff of cedar.

Hyssop typifies repentance; the linen dyed a scarlet colour, faith; and holiness of life, the staff of cedar.

Hyssop—lively—pungent—bitter. Linen—coloured with blood and opaque. Cedar,—incorruptible. By repentance, we seek Jesus; by faith, embrace him; and by holiness, walk in his ways. Repentance draws us near the Saviour; faith unites us to him; holiness confirms us.

PIERRE DU BOSC, 1650.

PURITY.

PSALM li. 10.—“Create in me a clean heart, O God.”

1. What is included in purity of heart?

1. A fixed habitual abhorrence of all forbidden indulgences of the flesh.
2. Shame and sorrow over all past impurities, both of heart and life.
3. Freedom, in a good measure, from impure thoughts and irregular desires.
4. A cautious fear of the least degrees of impurity.
5. A careful and habitual guard against everything which tends to pollute the mind.

II. The obligations that lie upon us to seek after such purity of heart.

1. An inclination to sensuality is directly contrary to the purity and holiness of the Divine nature.
2. Sensuality has a special tendency to extinguish the light of reason, and to unfit for things spiritual and sacred.
3. It is most contrary to the design and engagements of Christianity.
4. The blessed hope of the Gospel lays us under forcible engagements to present purity.

Application.

Let us inquire into our own state in reference to this subject. If an impure spirit has had dominion, reflect on the holiness of God—Rejoice in the purifying power of the blood of Christ—Cast off the works of darkness.

If you can justly hope that purification is begun in heart and life, adore Divine grace, aspire after higher measures of purity. Let the young heed these counsels.

DR JOHN EVANS, 1723.

DESIRES AFTER HEAVEN.

PSALM lv. 6.—“And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.”

It is an unspeakable source of consolation to a be-

liever in Christ, to find in his own experience an echo of the sentiments and desires of others, who have been eminent for holiness of heart and life. Indeed, Divine wisdom is conspicuous in the appointment, that Scripture truth should be not only didactic but illustrative, so that, looking into the glass of God's word, we behold, by comparison of ourselves with others, what manner of men we are. The language of our text might be that of impatience and repining, but this is not the spirit in which it was uttered by the Psalmist. We contemplate it as a legitimate aspiration after all that is eminently good.

I. The causes of that dissatisfaction which a child of God feels with the present state.

II. A practical improvement of the Psalmist's desires.

I. The causes, &c.

1. The deficiency of spiritual knowledge.
2. Interruptions to happiness of spirit.
3. Conscious inconsistency of character.
4. Imperfections of present service.

II. Practical improvement.

Instruction:—1. This world is not the Christian's rest.

2. He is to form suitable ideas of heaven.

3. In the exercise of faith he overcomes the fear of death.

Admonition:—1. Let the Christian beware of impatience, others of indifference.

2. How melancholy his state who is satisfied with this world.

Consolation:—The time is fast approaching when the most ardent desires of the believer will be more than realised.

"Tell me, my wrestling soul, didst ever try
How fast the wings of red-cross'd faith can fly?
Why begg'st thou then the pinions of a dove?
Faith's wings are swifter; but the swiftest—love."—QUARLES.

EDITOR.

CHRIST THE RESTORER.

PSALM lxi. 4.—“Then I restored that which I took not away.”

Introduction.—Assert and prove that this is Christ—explain the preceding verses—apply them to him.

I. What did Christ restore to God, and to man?

II. The manner in which he proceeded.

III. Reflections.

I. What did Christ restore?

1. To God:—(1.) The obedience and honour of his broken law. (2.) Full satisfaction to Truth, Purity and Justice. (3.) Harmony, order, and beauty to all his injured perfections. (4.) Allegiance, service, and obedience of the creature.

2. To man:—(1.) The true and saving knowledge of God. (2.) The lost image of God. (3.) Solid peace of soul. (4.) A right to all temporal enjoyment. (5.) Full victory over all enemies. (6.) Strength for all acts of obedience and duty. (7.) Possession of the heavenly paradise.

II. The manner, &c.

By covenant engagement—By his incarnation, life, death—By his gospel. He did all this freely, wisely, courageously, and surely.

III. Reflections.

1. How great a Saviour is Christ!
2. How miserable Christless souls!
3. What support and comfort to a weak believer!
4. Salvation in none but him.
5. Trust and rejoice in Jesus Christ.

J. RYLAND, SEN., 1750

THE PROSPERITY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

PSALM xcii. 12-15.—“The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be

planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

The title of this Psalm is, "A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath day." Many foolish writers believe that it was written by Adam himself. If this were true, it would be an immense curiosity indeed: for of all he did, nothing else has come down to us but the sad consequences of his eating the forbidden fruit. We have every reason to conclude that it was composed by David, who was distinguished more by attachment to the sanctuary of God, than by anything else. It consists of praise, the materials of which are sketched from the works of Jehovah—his dealings with the wicked—above all, with the righteous.

I. Who shall flourish?

II. How shall they flourish?

III. Where shall they flourish?

IV. When shall they flourish?

V. Why shall they flourish?

VI. Who can bear testimony to this?

I. Who shall, &c.—The righteous. There are none righteous by nature, but there are by grace. There is a twofold righteousness in Scriptures—the righteousness of justification, and the righteousness of sanctification. The one is a change of our state, the other of our nature. The one is a relative change, the other a personal change. The one entitles to glory, the other is a meetness for glory. The one is instantaneous, the other gradual and progressive. Though distinguishable, they are inseparable.

II. How shall they, &c.—Like the palm-tree; like a cedar in Lebanon. It is sufficient to know that these trees are beautiful in growth and form, and very fruitful—both are evergreens. Contrast a pre-

vious verse of Psalm. When the wicked spring as the grass, &c. There is a real active progressiveness in religion. It is a Christian's duty—his desire—his privilege. *His duty*: "Grow in grace," &c.; "Giving all diligence, add to your faith," &c. *His desire*—perfect that which concerneth me: "Forsake not the work of thine own hands." *His privilege*: "The righteous shall hold on his way;" "the Lord will give grace and glory," &c.

III. Where shall they flourish.—Those that be planted, &c.—The house of God is a garden—the Christian must be fixed there. He cannot expect to be in a prosperous condition who neglects the means of grace. When we cannot have access to the *means* of grace, we have access to the *word of grace*—the *throne of grace*—the spirit of grace.

IV. When shall they flourish.—"In old age." Not that they all live to be aged, but though they die young, they fill up their days—they die old, for life is not measured by days. Religion has a tendency to prolong life. Though others fail, Christians will endure. When the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day. An old Christian is like a tree in autumn.

V. Why are they to flourish.—"To shew that the Lord is upright."

It evidences his faithfulness to his engagements.

It shows they have found him what they took him to be.

VI. Who can bear testimony.—"I," says David. "He is my rock"—his rock from danger—his rock of refreshment, whose streams follow him all the wilderness through. There is nothing like experience to enforce our addresses to others. Therefore do this, —think well of his name, speak well of his name, recommend him to all around.

W. JAY.

THE VANITY OF HUMAN THOUGHTS.

PSALM xciv. 11.—“The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.”

If vanity had been ascribed to the meaner parts of creation, it had little more than accorded with our own ideas. If vanity had been ascribed only to the exercises of our sensual, or mortal part, it had been less humiliating. If vanity had been ascribed merely to the loose and trifling excursions of the imagination, it had been less affecting. If during our childhood and youth only, vanity had been ascribed to our thoughts, it would have been less surprising. But, “*Man at his best estate* is altogether vanity.” The decision proceeds from a quarter from which there can be no appeal: “*The Lord knoweth,*” &c.

I. With respect to the present world, consider what multitudes of thoughts are employed in vain.

II. With regard to religion and the concerns of a future life.

I. With respect to the present world, &c.

1. Seeking satisfaction where none is to be found.
2. Poring on events which cannot be recalled.
3. Anticipating evils which never befall us.
4. Valuing ourselves on things of little or no account.
5. Laying plans which must be disconcerted.

II. With regard to religion, &c.

1. What are the thoughts of the heathen world?
2. What are the thoughts of Christian world, where God's thoughts are neglected?
3. What is all that practical atheism which induces multitudes to act as if there were no God?
4. What are all the unbelieving, self-flattering, imaginations of wicked men, as though God were not in earnest in his threatenings?
5. What are the conceits of the self-righteous?

ANDREW FULLER.

THE DIFFERENCE OF TIMES.

PSALM xciv. 7.—“To-day if ye will hear his voice.”

- I. That *sooner* and *later* are not alike in respect to eternity.
- II. That times of *ignorance* and of *knowledge* are not alike.
- III. That *before* and *after* voluntary commission of known iniquity are not alike.
- IV. That *before* and *after* contracted naughty habits are not alike.
- V. That the time of God's gracious and particular *visitation*, and the time when God *withdraws* his gracious presence and assistance, are not alike.
- VI. The flourishing time of our *health* and *strength*, and the hour of sickness, weakness, and approach of death, are not alike.
- VII. *Now* and *hereafter*, *present* and *future*, *this* world, and the world *to come*, are not alike.

DR BENJAMIN WHICHCOT, 1690.

DOMESTIC HAPPINESS.

PSALM cxviii. 15.—“The voice of rejoicing is in the tabernacles of the righteous.”

Nothing can more usefully engage our attention than Human Nature and Human Life. “The proper study of mankind is Man.” His origin, and his end; the structure of his body, and the powers of his mind; his situation and his connexions, are all capable of yielding us boundless and edifying instruction.

In observing mankind, the private and familiar views of character are by far the most curious, interesting, and profitable. The greater part of our history is composed of minute and common incidents; and little and ordinary things serve more to discover a man, and conduce more to render him useful, than splendid and rare occurrences. A man is in truth what he is in his own family—whether vicious or virtuous, tyrannical or mild, miserable or happy. Domestic felicity is our subject. Let us consider two things: The *importance* and the *source* of this happiness.

I. What may be said in commendation of it?

II. What will be necessary to the possession of it?

I. What may be said, &c.—We shall establish the importance of Domestic happiness by taking some views of its connexions and influence. Consider it—

1. In reference to our avocations and cares.
2. In relation to the afflictions of life.
3. In reference to the good things of this life.
4. In reference to the snares and seductions of the world.

II. Open its sources, and examine on what it depends.

It does not depend upon rank and influence.

1. Order is indispensable.—Thence spring frugality, economy, charity, beauty, harmony, concurrence.
2. Self-government—good temper.—Many trials incident to domestic life.
3. Good sense.—To preserve from censoriousness, to prevent looking after visionary perfection, lead us to study dispositions, to produce good manners, prevent agitation of claims of superiority.
4. Religious principles.—If it be said there are happy families without religion, I answer—(1.) There is a difference between appearance and reality. (2.) Scriptures represent this as impossible. (3.) Religion secures those duties upon whose performance happiness depends. (4.) It attracts the Divine blessing.

W. JAY.

THE SONG AND THE SACRIFICE OF GRATITUDE.

PSALM cxviii. 27.—“God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light:
bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.”

I. The blessings acknowledged.

1. Saving knowledge is “light.”
2. Joy comfort, happiness, are “light.”
3. Providential mercies are “light.”
4. Prospects of future glory are “light.”

II. The consecration required.

1. There is a call to personal dedication (Rom. xii. 1).
The horns of the altar possessed historical interest. There the victims were bound beyond all possibility of escape; there the culprit, like Joab and Adonijah, found an asylum from the stroke of justice. The emblem may serve to teach the unalterable character of Christian engagements to the service of God, as well as the security enjoyed by him who is their subject.
2. An appeal for self-denying offerings to the cause of God: “Bind the sacrifices.” God requires sacrifices—love gives sacrifices (Hebrews xiii. 16). What is a sacrifice? Ask at the threshing-floor of Araunah. Ask in Simon’s house, where that alabaster-box, &c. Ask at Calvary! “Freely ye have received, freely give.”

EDITOR.

SINCERE OBEDIENCE.

PSALM cxix. 6.—“Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect
unto all thy commandments.”

I. The description of sincere obedience: “Respect to all,” &c.

II. The fruit of it: “Then shall I not be ashamed.”

I. The description, &c.

1. A sincere heart aims at universal obedience to God's law.
 (1.) All his commandments—Great and small—Those that require public, and those that require private duties—Those that concern the inward, and those that concern the outward man—Those that concern God, and those that concern man.

(2.) All are to be respected—We must approve of all without reservation—We must sincerely love all—We must labour to keep all.

2. Why are we to have respect to all God's commandments? They are all ratified by the same authority—Grace is given to observe all—A Christian cannot be perfect in degrees if not perfect in parts—They that do not obey all, will not long obey any.

Use 1. This reproves those who make one duty excuse another—those that go from sins to duties, and those that go from duties to sins.

2. A sincere respect for all God's commandments may be known:—By a constant endeavour to know God's will—By often searching and trying the heart—By seeking to renew peace with God after a fall—By diligent use of means for growth of faith and grace—By care and watchfulness against a besetting sin.

II. The fruit, &c.—There is a twofold shame—the shame of a guilty conscience, and the shame of a tender conscience. The one is a merit of sin, the other an act of grace.

1. They shall not be ashamed with respect to their own hearts in duties, in afflictions, in death.

2. Before the world.

3. At the day of judgment.

When sin is not allowed there is a threefold comfort—

1. Of justification. 2. Of growth in grace. 3. A pledge of glory.

Uses:—1. We deceive ourselves if we look for anything from sin but shame. How hard their hearts who have respect to no commandments, and yet are not ashamed!

3. A caution to God's children.

DR THOMAS MANTON, 1660.

A PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION.

PSALM cxix. 18.—“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”

Here is, I. A request: “Open thou mine eyes.”

II. The reason: “That I may,” &c.

In which reason is intimated, I. The necessity of Divine illumination; and then the profit of it.

Doctrine I. That we need that God should open our eyes, if we would have a right understanding of his word.

I. What is meant by opening the eyes? The saints do not complain of the obscurity of the law, but of their own blindness. The light which they beg is not anything besides the word. There is a double work in opening the eyes:—1. Taking away the veil. 2. Infusing light.

1. Taking away the veil:—(a) Ignorance; (b) Carnal knowledge and wisdom; (c) Prejudice and corrupt affections; (d) Carnal sense.

2. Infusing light:—(a) A clear sight of God's truth; (b) an applicative sight; (c) an affective sight; (d) a transforming sight; (e) such a sense of the truth as is prevalent over lusts and interests.

II. Reasons that show the necessity of this work:—(a) Spiritual blindness is natural to us. (b) How much spiritual blindness is worse than bodily. (c) We cannot help ourselves out of this misery. (d) When spiritual blindness is in part cured, we still need that God should open our eyes to the very last.

Uses:—1. To show us the reason why the Word prevaleth so little.

2. What need we have to consult with God whenever we make use of the Word.

3. Let this press us to seek after this blessing—the opening of the eyes.

Doctrine II. Those whose eyes are opened by God see wondrous things in his Word.

1. Wonderful purity. 2. Wonderful equity. 3. Marvellous wisdom. 4. Admirable harmony. 5. Wonderful gospel mysteries. 6. Wonderful effects of the Word.

Uses:—1. They that are most enlightened have most cause for wonder.

2 The wonder of God's works are great; those of his Word greater.

3. Let us cease wondering at worldly things.

DR THOMAS MANTON, 1660.

SUBMISSION UNDER AFFLICTION.

PSALM cxix. 75.—“I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.”

We all have need to prepare for afflictions, for we are to take up our cross daily. Now, to help you to a right carriage under them, these words, well considered, will be of some use to you—they are the confession of a humble soul, abundantly satisfied with God's dispensations. Observe,—

I. A general truth: “Thy judgments are right.”

II. A particular application of this truth: “In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.”

III. His sure persuasion of both: “I know.”

Doctrine:—It would much quiet the minds of the people of God about all the sad dispensations of his providence, if they would seriously consider the justice and faithfulness of them.

I. Illustrate the point by some considerations.

1. We are not only to grant that God's judgments are right in general, but that he hath in faithfulness afflicted us.

2. We must not only grant this truth, that God is faithful when we are at ease, but under the sharpest discipline.
 3. This acknowledgment must be the real language of our hearts.
 4. We must acknowledge, not only justice, but faithfulness.
 5. Faith must fix this as a ground not once to be questioned, much less to be doubted or denied, that God is just, upright, and faithful in all his dealings, though weak man be not able to conceive the reasons of them.
- II. Show that there is much of justice and faithfulness to be observed in all the afflictions which come upon us.
- There is justice.—1. Prove it from God's nature. 2. God never afflicts without cause. 3. He gives sinners time and warning. 4. Judgments are always short of the cause.
- There is faithfulness.—1. In the covenant, temporal mercies are promised conditionally, spiritual mercies absolutely. 2. All earthly events conduce to the spiritual good of believers. 3. Afflictions are specially conducive to spiritual good. 4. He is faithful in their time, kind, measure, and continuance.
- Use 1. Let this check the evils that are peculiar to a time of affliction:—murmuring—immoderate grief—fears and cares.
- Use 2. Let us acknowledge God's justice and faithfulness in all that befalls us. It is for his honour, and for our profit so to do.

DR MANTON.

LOVE TO GOD'S LAW.

PSALM cxix. 97.—“O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.”

In this Psalm you have a perfect character of a regenerate man; what he is, and what he ought to be in his meditations, his exercises, his affections; and all

this recommended to us from the frame of David's heart and example. Men of spiritual experience can best judge of these affections; for "as face answereth face in a glass," so doth the heart of one believer to another.

I. God's people have a great love to his Word: yea, such a hearty affection as cannot easily be expressed.

1. The Word of God deserves this love. (1.) Because of its Author. (2.) Because of its contents.—(a) Certainly true. (b) Supremely good, *e. g.*, Reconciliation with God, eternal salvation. (c) Profound and mysterious. 3. Because of its use.—To increase the knowledge of God, to convert the soul, it humbles for sin, cleanses the heart, comforts the broken-hearted, builds up in faith, directs our practice, sustains in all conditions.
2. The saints readily yield this love to the Word. (1.) Their hearts are suited to it. (2.) They have tasted the goodness of it.

Use 1. Let this shame us that our love to God's Word is so cold.

Use 2. Be persuaded to get this love to God's Word. It will wean from sinful delight. It will make the heart more constant with God. It will give a deeper insight into the mysteries of godliness.

Use 3. Have we this love to God's Word? We shall be much in reading, hearing, praying. We shall delight to get it into the heart. We shall love the *whole* word—love it *always*.

II. They that love the Word will be meditating therein continually.

1. Love causeth this. The soul is more where it loves than where it lives.
2. Meditation cherishes love.

This reproves those whose musings are of vanity all the day—who look upon good thoughts as a burden—who read and hear, but do not meditate.

It informs us that we are so slow to meditate because wanting in love.

The more the heart is replenished with holy meditations,
 the less it will be pestered with worldly thoughts.
 Thoughts will kindle affections after heavenly things.
 By holy thoughts we most resemble the purity of God.
 By these the soul is present with God.

DR MANTON.

ISRAEL'S HOPE ENCOURAGED.

PSALM cxxx. 7.—“Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.”

I. An exhortation.

II. A reason for that exhortation.

III. An amplification of that reason.

I. An exhortation: “Let Israel hope in the Lord.”

1. The matter.—A duty: “hope.” The best things are in reversion for the saints. Believers will meet with difficulties before they reach them. The grace of hope well exercised is the only way to overcome these difficulties.
2. The manner by which the exhortation is expressed.—As a command, or an encouragement; a rebuke, or an entreaty, or a caution.
3. The inferences from the exhortation. (1.) The exercise of hope is indispensably necessary. (2.) It is very delightful to God. (3.) Only the hope of Israelites is esteemed by him.

II. The reason, &c.: “For with the Lord there is mercy,”—Mercy to be tested—*Tender* mercy—*Great* mercy—*Rich* mercy—*Manifold* mercy—that diminishes not. Mercy to compass us round about—to follow us. Israel is a pitiful thing of himself. His enemies are bent on his destruction. He has a loving God.

III. The amplification, &c.: “And with him is plenteous redemption.”

1. Redemption by purchase, and by power.
 2. The sufficiency of this redemption, suitable and plenteous.
- Mercy is the original and cause of our redemption, and redemption is the manifestation of God's mercy.

IV. Application.

1. How sad our state by sin.
2. How dangerous to rest on any but Christ.
3. Do nothing in worship but as led by Christ.
4. Hold fast your profession.
5. Take heed of offence at the Word.
6. Plenteous redemption; let Israel hope.
7. Doth not thy heart long after mercy?

JOHN BUNYAN, 1685.

THE DUTY OF PRAISE.

PSALM cxxxvi. 1.—“O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

Praise is the everlasting employment of the heavenly state, for which we are to be trained by the exercises of faith, and hope, and love of contemplation and devotion, and such imperfect essays of thanksgiving as we are capable of while sojourners here. It is a satisfaction to reflect that the very duty of praise, especially being attended with so much pleasure in the performance, shows our condition to be full of hope; and that ‘God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain ‘salvation.’”

I. Concerning the duty to which we are here invited:
“O give thanks unto the Lord.”

1. It supposes a grateful sense of Divine benefits.
2. It implies suitable expressions of gratitude.

II. The persons called upon to perform this duty.

1. The whole world of mankind.

2. Particularly the church of God.
3. Those who have experienced special instances of the Divine favour.

III. The foundation of this duty.

1. God's goodness.
2. God's enduring mercy. (1.) In opposition to his anger. (2.) In contrast with the favour of men. (3.) Absolutely signifying the constancy and perpetual duration of Divine mercy.

IV. Inferences.

1. Religion is a reasonable service.
2. Let us, from a sense of Divine mercy, resolve to serve, praise, and trust the Lord for ever.

H. GROVE, 1735.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

PSALM cxlv. 11.—“They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.”

The absolute dominion of God is a subject worthy to be celebrated by all creatures: it is the frequent theme of praise in the Scriptures. There is another kingdom—which God has entrusted to the hands of his well-beloved Son—the mediatorial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the subject of the most exalted praise, and of the most glorious prophecies of the Old Testament, as well as of all the histories, doctrines, and revelations of the New Testament. It is styled the kingdom of heaven—the kingdom of God—it is the kingdom which the God of heaven has set up among men upon the earth. It is contrasted with the kingdom of the power of darkness; and its subjects are described as being translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, which is a kingdom of “marvellous light.”

- I. The glory of the kingdom is manifested in its origin. It had its origin in infinite mercy and grace. It entered into the councils of the Eternal before the foundation of the world was laid. In order to establish it, it was necessary that the Son of God should become incarnate. The doctrines of the gospel are the grand instruments of its increase.
- II. The glory of the kingdom of Christ is manifested in the manner and spirit of its administration. Justice is most conspicuous. It is benign and gracious. Individual interests are consulted as they cannot be in human administrations. Its Monarch is thoroughly disinterested.
- III. The glory of this kingdom appears in the character of its subjects.
1. They are enlightened.
 2. They are renewed.
 3. They are prepared for perfect blessedness.
- IV. The glory of Christ's kingdom is manifest in the privileges attached to it.
1. Peace.
 2. Dignity.
 3. Immortality.
 4. It is a growing kingdom.
 5. It is perpetual.
- Pray and labour for its advancement. Press into this kingdom.

ROBERT HALL.

HOPE AND FEAR BALANCED.

PSALM cxlvii. 11.—“The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.”

The dignity and privilege of the righteous, who are God's favourites, here appear very bright and blessed. What can prove men more great and happy than this, that the God of heaven takes pleasure in them? God takes pleasure in his saints, because his image is upon them. “He rejoiceth in the work of his own hands.”

He delights to behold them, to converse with them, and to employ them. But the character here given of God's favourites is that upon which I shall speak. They "fear God," and "hope in his mercy." Fear and hope are to balance one another. Fear of God is to keep hope from swelling to presumption, and hope is to check fear from sinking into despondency. We must keep up both hope and fear,

I. As to the concerns of our souls, and our spiritual and eternal state.

II. As to our outward concerns, relating to the present life.

III. As to the public concerns of the church of God, and our own land and nation.

I. As to our own souls, &c.—Nothing so much concerns us as their prosperity and happiness in the favour of God.

1. We must keep up both a holy dread of God, and a humble delight in him.
2. We must keep up a trembling for sin, and a triumphing in Christ.
3. We must keep up jealousy of ourselves, and a thankful sense of God's grace in us.
4. We must keep up a caution of our ways, and a constant confidence in the grace of God.
5. We must keep up a holy fear lest we come short, and a good hope that we shall persevere.

II. As to our temporal concerns.

1. In worldly prosperity we must balance the hopes which sense suggests, with the fears that reason and religion suggest. (1.) Keep up an awful regard to the sovereignty of Divine providence, and its disposal of us and ours. (2.) A full conviction of the vanity of the world. (3.) A lively expectation of troubles. (4.) A humble sense of our own demerits. (5.) Serious thoughts of death. You who are young, expect not great things from the world. You who are rich, make not abundance

your confidence. You who are cheerful and gay, let the fear of God restrain your mirth from excess.

2. When the world frowns upon us, and our affairs are perplexed, we must keep up a good hope. (1.) Hope in God's power. (2.) In his providence. (3.) In his pity. (4.) In his promise. You are beginning the world with little, be not discouraged. You who have peril and hazard in your concerns, do not give way to fear. You who have been reduced from affluence, do not despond.

III. As to public concerns, &c.

1. We have always cause to keep up a holy fear as to public affairs. We are a provoking people. We are a divided people. In the world we shall have tribulation. Let us ever be with God in prayer for the nation. Contribute to its well-being by personal reformation. Provide for worse circumstances that can befall us.
2. We must keep up a good hope as to public affairs. We are encouraged, (1.) By God's word. (2.) By his work among us. (3.) By the wonders he has wrought for us.

MATTHEW HENRY, 1711.

THE PLEASANTNESS OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

PROVERBS iii. 17.—“Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

Religion is very often in Scripture, particularly in this book, represented under the name of Wisdom; because it is the highest improvement of human nature, and the surest and best guide of human life. True Christians are the truly wise men. The happiness of those that are religious is here proved from the true profit that is to be got by religion, and the transcendent pleasure to be found in it.

- I. Explain the doctrine—That true piety has true pleasure. Hypocrites have not this pleasure. Teru

Christians may, through their own fault and folly, want much of it. The ways of religion are right and pleasant, because without the alloy of injury and iniquity—without toil and difficulty—without expense and loss. Their pleasure is real, rational, enduring.

II. The pleasure of real religion may be proved from its nature.—Lay aside all prejudice; grant that man is to be chiefly considered as an intellectual, immortal being. To be religious is to know the only true God and Jesus Christ—to return to God and repose in him is the rest of the soul—to come to God as a Father, by Jesus as a Mediator—to enjoy God in all comforts—to cast all cares upon God—to rejoice in the Lord always—to make a business of praising God—to have all inordinate desires corrected—to have all unruly passions governed—to dwell in love to all men—to live in communion with God—to keep up a constant prospect of future glory.

III. The pleasantness of religion may be proved from the provision made for their comfort, and the privileges they are entitled to, who are truly religious.

For their comfort: there is a purchase of peace and pleasure—promises of peace and pleasure, and a provision for the application of them. The blessed Spirit is sent as their Comforter—the Scriptures are written for their joy—ordinances instituted for their comfort—ministry for their instruction.

Their privileges are—Free from arrest, because discharged from debt of sin. They have witness of the Spirit that they are sons of God—access to throne of grace—sanctified use of mercies—testimony of good conscience—earnests of eternal life.

IV. The doctrine is confirmed by experience.—Ask those who have tried ways of sin and wickedness. Their pleasures are unsatisfying in the enjoyment, bitter and tormenting in the reflection.—Ask those

who have tried the ways of wisdom. They have found the rules and dictates of religion agreeable to right reason and true interest—they have found exercises of devotion pleasant and comfortable. Pleasures of religion have overcome in them pains of sense. The better progress they have made, the more pleasure they have had.

V. The doctrine illustrated by the similitude used in the text of a pleasant journey.—It helps to make a journey pleasant to go upon a good errand—to have strength and ability—to have daylight—a good guide—a good guard—good company—a plain path—fair overhead—needful accommodation—to sing on the way—to have a good prospect.

VI. Vindicate the doctrine from objections.—It is easy to confront the slander of its enemies. They speak evil of things they understand not. It is easy to set aside misrepresentations of false friends, who are morose or melancholy. The pleasantness of these ways can be reconciled even with their difficulties, as described in Scripture. It is a life of repentance; but trifling in this way, and turning out of it, cause this sorrow. Even in repentance, if it be right, there is true pleasure; and there is pleasure flowing from it. It is true, that to be religious is to take care and pains, and to labour earnestly. We are divinely strengthened for this, and encouraged in it. We must deny ourselves many things pleasing to sense. But they are things comparatively despicable—really dangerous. We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom. It is light affliction at the most. As these abound, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

VII. Application of the doctrine.

1. Let us all be persuaded to walk in these ways. See the folly of sinful pleasures. Be convinced of the plea-

sure of wisdom's ways. "Man's chief end is to glorify God." That is best for us which is best for our souls. The greatest joy is that which a stranger doth not intermeddle with. All is well that ends everlastingly well.

2. Let those that profess religion make it more and more pleasant—keep up good thoughts of God—dwell much on his promises—order religious affairs with discretion—live in love—be much in holy joy—act in constant dependence on Christ—converse much with the glory that is to be revealed.
3. Let us bear our testimony to the truth of this doctrine. Let our hearts be enlarged in all religious exercises—our conversation cheerful. Look with contempt on sensual pleasures—envy not sinners—be not dejected by afflictions—be liberal to the distressed and poor—bring others to partake of the same pleasures—be willing to die.
4. Long for the perfection of spiritual pleasures in the kingdom of glory.

MATTHEW HENRY, 1714.

THE ADVANTAGES OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

PROVERBS iv. 18.—“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

- I. This resemblance sets forth the *certainty* and *evidence* afforded by a religious life. Its subject is sure, that it is the path of God's commandment. He sees that it is the path of life.
- II. This comparison signifies the *beauty* and *excellence* of a holy life.
- III. It exhibits the *pleasantness* of a holy life.
 1. Pleasures of action.
 2. Pleasures of reflection.
 3. Pleasures of hope.

IV. The path of the just is as the shining light in respect of its *instructiveness*.

V. In regard to its *progressive nature*.

1. The good man improves in knowledge of Divine things.
2. In the adhesion of his will to Divine things.
3. In the perfection of his example.
4. In the ease and pleasure of well-doing.

VI. The comparison shows that a religious life will at last issue in *consummate perfection*—a perfection of holiness and of happiness.

Application.

To those who are not in the number of those just persons.—Immediately enter upon a holy life—begin right—be-ware of taking up with partial holiness—be not surprised at slowness of work.

To those who are just in a Gospel sense.—Ascertain and fix your character—take the comfort of your state—walk circumspectly—compare your present with your future state.

H. GROVE, 1742.

THE DESIRE OF THE RIGHTEOUS GRANTED.

PROVERBS x. 24.—“But the desire of the righteous shall be granted.”

I. Who is the righteous man?

II. What are his desires?

III. What is intended by their being granted?

I. Who is the righteous man?

There is one that is righteous in his own eyes—there are those counted righteous by their neighbours—those that are indeed righteous, 1. Whom God counts so. 2. Whom God makes so by possessing them with a principle of righteousness. 3. Who are practically righteous.

II. What are the desires, &c.

1. Communion with God.

2. Enjoyment of holy ordinances.

3. The personal presence of the Lord, (Phil. i. 23.)

III. What is meant by granting these desires?—(Psalm cxlv. 19; xxxvii. 4; xxi. 2.)

The desires of God and of the righteous agree together.

They are the life of all their prayers, and God delights in these. By means of his desires, a righteous man unfolds his heart to God. They bear him away from the world to God.

IV. Application.

There are other desires than those of the righteous—vain desires—hypocritical desires—formal desires.

Art thou righteous?—How camest thou so?—In whose judgment?—Take heed of thy desires—Are they lawful?—Are they not granted?—God gives to his people *what* and *when* will be most to their advantage.

JOHN BUNYAN, 1685.

DESPISING THE SOUL.

PROVERBS xv. 32.—“He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul.”

Solomon here gives an account of those to whom he could do no good. Though his discourses were plain, practical, sententious, and methodical, there were those who were none the better for such a preacher. They refuse to hear instruction—refuse to heed it—refuse to comply with it. Bless God who hath made you to differ. Take heed of being pleased only, and not ruled by instruction. Pity those who refuse instruction. What is said of the folly of those who refuse instruction, is the commendation of those that receive it. They that refuse instruction make it evident thereby that they despise their own souls.

I. Who are they that despise their own souls?

1. Those who deny the spirituality and immortality of the soul.
2. Those who by their practice despise the soul. Those that abuse the soul by devoting it to the service of Satan; that defile it with the pollution of sin; that deceive it with lies and falsehood; that distract and disquiet it with inordinate cares of the world; that put it off with things of time. Those that hazard their souls by exposing them to the wrath of God; that pawn them for the world; that neglect them; taking no care to get their wounds healed, wants supplied; that keep no watch over them; that do not secure their eternal welfare; that prefer the body.

II. Show the folly of such a course.

1. Consider the nature of the soul. Noble, excellent, of Divine origin, of great powers.
2. Consider the nearness of the soul. The soul is the man.
3. Consider the purchase of the soul; the price of its redemption.
4. Consider the projects laid for souls—Christ and Satan.
5. Consider the perpetual duration of souls.

III. Application.

1. Let us see and bewail the folly of having had such low thoughts of the soul.
2. Let us make it appear that we do value our souls.
3. Let us value other things as they have a relation to our souls.
4. If we must not despise our own souls, we must not despise the souls of others.

MATTHEW HENRY, 1713.

THE SECURITY OF THOSE WHO TRUST IN GOD.

PROVERBS xviii. 10.—“The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”

The wise man here points out the refuge and

security of every child of God. And he certainly intends to set this in opposition to everything else in which worldly men might place their dependence (verse 11).

I. What is to be understood by "the name of the Lord?" The Lord God himself, because God is known by the discoveries which he has made of himself.

1. God is known by his visible creation. He has engraven his name on all his works (Psalm xix. 1; Rom. i. 20).
2. God has more explicitly written his name and revealed his nature in his holy Word.
3. God reveals his name in the daily administration of his providence.

II. What is implied in "the righteous runneth into it, as a strong tower"?

1. A lively exercise of faith, both in the power and willingness of God to protect them.
2. The use of fervent prayer.
3. By diligence in his duty: he will watchfully heed his own conduct—use all lawful means for his protection—renounce dependence on created help.

III. The perfect security of the righteous: "He is safe."

1. Wherein the safety consists. (1.) God's special providence over them. (2.) Strength and support in trial. (3.) Complete victory over all sufferings of every kind.
2. The absolute certainty of this safety. (1.) The Divine perfections. (2.) God's faithful promises. (3.) The experience of the saints.

See the sinfulness of distrust—its remedy; and learn the surest, shortest, safest way of deliverance.

THE EQUALITY OF MEN.

PROVERBS xxii. 2.—“The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.”

- I. Clearly state the subject.—As to the degree of riches and poverty, it cannot be ordinarily thought the will of God, that men should on the one hand be exorbitantly rich, or on the other hand necessitously poor. The manner of becoming rich or poor makes so considerable a difference in the case, that of some it may be truly said, it is not pleasing to God that they should be what they are. There are instances of persons whose riches or poverty may in a peculiar manner be ascribed to the Providence of God. Men are made rich or poor, not by the sole agency of Providence, but in concurrence with their own actions and second causes. Had man never fallen, we have reason to think poverty would have been unknown.
- II. Show that it is the will of God, that there should be distinctions of *rich* and *poor* in the world.
 1. This is evident from Scripture.
 2. This inequality of human circumstances is not inconsistent with God's justice, but an argument of his wisdom. By this means the order of society is maintained and its wants supplied. A standing conviction of the vanity of the world. An opportunity for the exercise of virtue.
- III. Application.
 1. The rich should acknowledge God in all their enjoyments. This is opposed to self-satisfaction; to intemperance; to a sordid, niggardly temper. They should carefully avoid contempt of the poor. It is their duty to be charitable and beneficent.
 2. The poor should be contented. This will oppose all murmuring banish envy at others, prevent anarchy. They should show modesty Resolve to be honest Ex-

ercise industry. Their present condition should be a stimulus to seek a better.

3. Setting aside the inequality of outward circumstances, the rich and poor are in all other respects upon equal terms.

(1.) They have the same nature, endowed with same faculties, subject to same weaknesses and calamities.

(2.) The care of Divine Providence is extended to both.

(3.) They are upon a level in relation to Christian privileges.

(4.) They must undergo the same impartial judgment.

H. GROVE, 1742.

SIN COVERED AND SIN CONFESSED.

PROVERBS xxviii. 13.—“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

I. The guilt of those who cover their sins, and the misery that awaits them.

II. The prudence of those who confess and forsake sin, and the happiness awarded.

I. The guilt and misery.

Men hide their sins, (1.) From God. (2.) From fellow-men. (3.) From themselves.

1. They cover their sins from God, depriving him of omniscience. (Psalm xciv. 7.)

2. They cover sin from others—secrecy.

3. They hide sins from themselves—Some disowning them, others forgetting, others palliating them.

II. The prudence and happiness, &c.

Two ways are indicated by which we may avoid the misery of those who cover their sins—confession and forsaking.

Confession is necessary. God demands it. It must be universal, contrite.

Sin must be forsaken. This is the touchstone of sincerity.

HENRI CHATELAIN.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

ECCLESIASTES vii. 2.—“It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting.”

- I. It gives better lessons.—It points to the end of man. It is a great matter to induce men to think at all. This, if anything, will set them thinking. The house of festivity destroys recollection, but the house of mourning inculcates thoughtfulness.
- II. It has better company.—“The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.” Here are the redeemed of the Lord: men prepared for any dispensation which God is pleased to afford—learning and studying his will, and asking what he would have them to do. Here are found also “the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and the noble army of martyrs.” There Christ was found—“the man of sorrows.” This is the way to his table, and to his friends above.
- III. It has better comforts.—This would be an inexplicable paradox to many. There is bread to eat which the world knows not of. “Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ.” His friends have songs in the house of their pilgrimage. What is comfort? Not the song of the drunkard—not the foolish talk of the trifler—not the nonsense of the man who, for amusement, displays his wit, or rather his folly! It is a serious satisfaction—something sedative—something well-grounded—something that will administer consolation on a death-bed. If there is nothing else in the house of mourning to comfort us, there is the voice of our Master—the voice of faithfulness, power, and love, to accomplish what he has said: “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

IV. A better end awaits us in the house of mourning. It is the way by which God leads his children, and he is leading them to a kingdom. Better the distresses of Lazarus, than the purple, fine linen, and sumptuous fare of Dives.—However dark the house of mourning may be, it will admit the rays of the sun—a beam of immortality. There is not any one house, which will not soon be a house of mourning. Remember that whatever is gone, one thing is left—the promise of a faithful God. Whatever remedies may be proposed for such occasions, there is no effectual remedy but the gospel.

R. CECIL.

THE ABUSE OF DIVINE FORBEARANCE.

ECCLESIASTES viii. 11.—“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

To know things in their principles has always been deemed the highest kind of science. The attention of a vulgar mind may be roused by effects; but a wise man looks back from consequences to the cause, and explores the source of the disease, in order to prescribe more certainly the means of cure. That there is much wickedness in the world is undeniable; whence does it arise? Solomon views it as arising from an abuse of the Divine forbearance. Not that this is the only source of iniquity, but it is a very powerful and a very prevailing one.

There is a sentence denounced against sin. The execution of it is commonly long suspended. This delay emboldens the sinner in his crimes.

I. Sin is deservedly called an evil work. It is the work of the devil. It is folly, ingratitude, rebellion,

treason. It degrades the soul. It defiles the soul. It robs us of the likeness, the presence, the favour of God. How deplorable its consequences, and what misery has it produced! It cannot go unpunished. Anger in God is not a passion, but a principle. It is justice, essential to the perfection of his character. No government can exist without laws, and laws are nothing without sanctions.—The sentence is recorded in the trouble, the remorse, the forebodings of conscience—in the history of mankind—in the Bible.

II. Sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed. There is no uncertainty as to its final accomplishment. The execution of the sentence is not always deferred. The language of the text agrees with the general proceedings of the Supreme Being. In this forbearance, God places himself before us as our example. If punishment always followed sin instantly, this would cease to be a state of probation—obedience would not be voluntary, but forced—the whole design of religion would be subverted—God would be the destroyer rather than the governor of the world. Mankind are so blended together, that it is scarcely possible to strike an individual without affecting others. The goodness of God is to be acknowledged in this dispensation.

III. That the depravity of man turns Divine clemency into presumption. When men begin a wicked course, conscience is tender, scrupulous, fearful—punishment does not come, they venture again;—after many successes, they go forward carelessly and boldly.

1. Solomon does not draw the reflection from a few single instances.
2. Nothing can be more vile and base than this abuse.
3. Be assured nothing will be more fatal.

W. JAY.

DEPENDENCE ON THE SAVIOUR

SONG OF SOLOMON viii. 5.—“Leaning upon her beloved.”

- I. Resting on his promises.
- II. Relying on his power.
- III. Realising his love.
- IV. Rejoicing in his salvation.

J. T. NOTTIDGE.

REPENTANCE NECESSARY.

ISAIAH i. 16.—“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil.”

- I. God doth primarily desire the good of all his creatures.
- II. He doth not desire man's salvation without his return.
- III. He doth not desire man's return without his own consent.

DR BENJAMIN WHICHCOT, 1690.

ISAIAH'S MISSION.

ISAIAH vi. 8.—“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

None, perhaps, of all the Old Testament prophets had a more solemn mission than Isaiah, who spake so plainly and fully of Christ and the grace of the gospel. If we look back at the preparation he experienced, we

shall find him touched with a humbling sense of his own sinfulness, and a comfortable sense of the pardon of sin, and his acceptance with God. He was much affected with the sight of his own unworthiness. God looks upon those as best fitted for his service who are humble and low in their own eyes. He was impressed with a comfortable assurance of reconciliation to God. None are so fit to display to others the riches of gospel grace, as those who themselves have received the comfort of it.

I. The counsel of God concerning the prophet's mission.

II. The prophet's consent.

I. The counsel of God, &c.: "Whom shall I send?" This is after the language of men. It is God in his glory who speaks here—it is God in three persons. It is observable that the 9th and 10th verses are, in John xii. 40, 41, applied to the Son of God, and in Acts xxviii. 25, 26, to the Holy Spirit.—The three persons in the blessed Trinity gloriously concur in the gospel. It is the unspeakable favour of God to us, that he is pleased to communicate his mind to us, and to make it known by men like ourselves. It is a rare thing to find one that is fit to go for God; none are allowed to go for God, but those who are sent by him.

II. The consent of Isaiah.

Observe, 1. His readiness. 2. His resolution. 3. His referring himself to God: "Lord, send me"—give me a commission—give me the necessary qualifications—give me the opportunity—give me success. Going on in the ministry, we must remember that we are God's agents. We have no reason to be ashamed of our office. We must faithfully deliver his mind. We must not seek self-interest. We shall have to give an account of our negotiation. God will cer-

tainly bear us out in all we do, according to our commission.

MATTHEW HENRY, 1712.

THE GREAT TRUMPET BLOWN.

ISAIAH xxvii. 13.—“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.”

I. The interesting comparison.

II. The distressing condition.

III. The glorious recovery.

I. The interesting comparison.—The gospel is compared to a great trumpet blown; because,

1. It is designed to arrest universal attention.
2. To proclaim a new era.
3. To declare a war.
4. To gather an assembly.

II. The distressing condition: “Ready to perish.” It is not merely from sorrow, suffering, and sin, that Jesus saves, but from these in their last stages,—when the poison has diffused its noxious leaven through every artery.

1. Distressing condition of unconverted: captive in Assyria, outcast in Egypt.
2. Power of Jesus to save to the uttermost.

III. The glorious recovery.

1. To a spiritual and pure worship,
2. To an illustrious companionship.
3. To an eternal home.

EDITOR.

WAITING UPON THE LORD.

ISAIAH xl. 31.—“But they that wait upon the Lord shall ~~renew~~ their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

Compare with these last words of the chapter, the language with which it commences: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.” “They that wait,” &c.—And whence is this strong consolation to be derived? Not from man,—“his glory is as the grass.” Not from nature,—for the nations are but as the small dust of the balance. Not from idols,—their ears cannot be touched by sounds of prayer;—but from the word of God that abideth for ever—from the strong-handed shepherd of Israel—the everlasting God, who names the stars, weighs the mountains, counts the dewdrops, &c.

- I. The characters described: “They that wait upon the Lord.” This is opposed to idolatry, to hypocritical worship, and to occasional acts of devotion. It includes *earnest desire*, *confident expectation*, *patient reliance*. It is not an indolent repose, but a dependent activity that embraces the whole Christian life.
 1. The believer waits upon God in the use of the doctrine of God’s holy providence.
 2. This is the attitude he assumes in all acts of Divine worship.
 3. This is his sentiment in relation to prospects and anticipations of final glory.
- II. The blessings promised: “They shall mount up with wings as eagles,” &c. These include—
 1. Exemplary privileges in the exercises of the Divine life. The power of abstraction. An eagle-like elevation from the world. Flights of devotion. Aspirations after holiness. Communion with God.

2. A perpetual renewal of the powers of Divine grace: "They renew their strength." They are not trusted with large supplies of grace. They have not to carry to-day's resources into to-morrow's necessities.
3. Persevering endurance: "They shall run, and not be weary."
4. Ultimate success: "They shall walk, and not faint."

Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms.

C. JONES.

BELIEVERS GOD'S WITNESSES.

ISAIAH xliii. 10.—"Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord."

Such was the honourable character sustained by the Jewish church, and surely it is not less applicable to true Christians.

- I. Some of the principal things which believers are called to witness for God.
 - II. Describe the character and qualifications of God's witnesses.
- I. Some of the principal things, &c.
 1. They are witnesses to his being and glorious perfections.
 2. To the equity of his holy law.
 3. To the excellence of his gospel.
 4. To the power of his grace.
 5. To the influence of his truth.
 6. To the use of his ordinances.
 7. To the attention of his providence.
 8. To the fulfilment of his promises.
 9. To the glorious nature of his rest.
 - II. Describe the character, &c.—They are *chosen, cal-*

led, and faithful witnesses (Rev. xvii. 14; Isa. xli. 8, 9; Acts xxii. 14, 15). They are *impartial* witnesses—*experimental* and *practical*, *tried*, sworn witnesses. They are *many* and *continual* witnesses. They are *living* and *dying* witnesses. They are *competent*, *credible*, nay *unanswerable*, witnesses. At the last day they will be *convincing*, or else *condemning* witnesses.

Sinner, hearest thou not what these testify against thee. If they are right, you are wrong. They witness for God, and God will witness for them.

O believers, bear witness. Be consistent. Lament that you are such defective witnesses. Learn the necessity of regeneration. Learn the advantage of trials; they give weight to your testimony. In whatsoever situation you are at present, whether it be agreeable or not, be not so anxious for a change, as to know how you may glorify God under existing circumstances.

DR RYLAND.

LOOKING TO CHRIST.

ISAIAH xlv. 22.—“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.”

- I. Explain the duty here expressed by the metaphor of looking.
- II. Urge it upon you by sundry important considerations.
- I. Explain the duty, &c.—A man's looks often discover the frame and condition of his mind.
 1. Looking to Christ implies a particular notice and distinct knowledge of him.
 2. An importunate eagerness for relief from him.
 3. A wishful expectation of deliverance from him.

4. An humble dependence upon him for salvation.
5. A universal, cheerful submission to his authority.
6. A hearty approbation of him as a Saviour, and supreme affection to him.
7. Joy and gratitude for his delivering goodness.

II. Urge it upon you, &c.

1. It is salvation that is here offered.
2. This salvation may be obtained upon low terms.
3. It is Immanuel that invites and commands you to look.
4. It is Immanuel to whom we are to look.
5. He is able to save us upon our looking to him.
6. Look to him ! for as he is God, so there is none else.
7. You are particularly invited, being especially meant by those in the ends of the earth.

PRESIDENT DAVIES.

THE STRENGTH AND BEAUTY OF THE CHURCH.

ISAIAH lii. 1.—“Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.”

I. The alarm sounded.

II. The directions given.

III. The dwelling-place described.

I. The alarm.

1. The impenitent sinner is as one asleep.
2. The lethargic Christian requires to be awakened.
3. The discouraged and despondent disciple needs reviving.

II. The directions given.—The church's strength is not in herself—not in men—but in the strength of Israel.

1. Distinct apprehension of the atonement.
2. Reliance on Saviour's righteousness.
3. Communion with Holy Spirit.
4. Manifestation of Christian graces.

5. Exercise of believing, fervent prayer.

III. The dwelling-place described.

1. The church is a city.
2. Heaven is a city.

EDITOR.

THE HAPPY IMMUNITY FROM EVIL OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

ISAIAH liv. 17.—“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”

The right use of the promises of God is one of the most desirable attainments in the Christian life. They are heavenly food, and, like the manna, to be gathered in accordance with Divine directions. Some err through the presumptuous adoption to themselves of spiritual privileges; others, through timid abstinence from their appropriation.

It is not enough to give a general assent to their truth. They must be the objects of faith; applied to the individual; made arguments in prayer, and watchfully corroborated by the observance of Providence.

I. The armoury of Satan.

II. The worldly man's malice.

III. The godly man's vindication.

I. The armoury, &c.—Satan is compared to a strong man *armed*. He has different modes of attack and instruments of warfare; among his formidable weapons—

1. Persecution.
2. Temptation:
3. False teaching.

(Shew that none of these have prospered.)

II. The worldly man's malice.—Nothing will please the wayward world. (Children in the market-place.) Once profess Christ, be zealous for his glory, vindicate his cause, proclaim his salvation, and you invoke calumny and scorn.

1. Secret testimony of conscience counteracts it.
2. Integrity of life disappoints hostility.
3. God will vindicate his people.

III. The godly man's vindication.—What an inheritance is this. Righteousness of two kinds imparted and imputed. These defy all detraction. Both of Divine origin—not to be shaken or uprooted by assaults of Satan or malice of men.

Be not disheartened by opposition, or disarmed by false confidence.

EDITOR.

THE OFFER OF SALVATION.

ISAIAH lv. 1.—“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.”

The favours which princes and their ministers bestow upon their people are not often purely disinterested; they are usually attended with conditions that augment the subjection of the governed, and the arbitrary power of the governing. Joseph, the prime minister of Pharaoh, was no doubt actuated by special prudence when, in the years of plenty, he accumulated corn enough, not only to nourish the Egyptians, but their neighbours also, during the famine. But, after all, he sold the succour that he furnished at a dear rate. The silver, the flocks, the lands, the persons even of the multitude, are parted with for bread.

Joseph is in many respects a type of Jesus, but not so here. We should rather call him a type of Moses

and the Law; the rigorous law, which promises nothing except under hard conditions, and which sells life and liberty, never bestowing them as a free gift. There is a Joseph infinitely more tender and beneficent than the son of Jacob, who provides for men destitute of all that is necessary, resources a thousand times more abundant than those of Egypt, a treasury where there is no payment required, and the door is never shut. So far from waiting for our solicitations, he invites us in the most engaging terms to come and take all that we want to satisfy our largest desires: "Ho, every one." Consider,

I. The blessings offered under the figures of "water," "wine," and "milk."

II. The persons to whom these blessings are promised: "The thirsty, and those without money."

III. Press the exhortation, "Ho, every one," &c.

I. The blessings offered, &c.

1. They are New Testament blessings, the blessings procured by the Saviour.
2. Spiritual things are intended under the figure used.
3. It is important not to spiritualize these metaphors too far.

Water: the grace of Holy Spirit, which cleanses, refreshes, satisfies, one of first principles of life. Wine strengthens; milk nourishes. By the union of these figures we have set forth the abundance, sufficiency, and variety of gospel blessings.

II. The persons, &c.—The thirsty, and hungry; the first are named, the second supposed (see following verses). The soul's necessities are represented by those of the body. Hunger and thirst are the most frequent, strongest, most imminent of corporeal desires.

1. Our natural condition is one of great destitution.
2. It is necessary to feel this—deeply, and grievously—pain, desire, and effort.

Another class addressed is those "without money."

1. All spiritual blessings are originally both undeserved and undesired.
2. Repentance, faith, and prayer, bear no proportion to gifts of grace.

III. Enforce exhortation.—It is loud and pressing, this cry; it is universal in its application.

1. Come.
2. Some things must be done; we have to part with some, and acquire other things.
3. Experimental possession only, sufficient.

SUPERVILLE LE PERE.

THE FAITHFUL WITNESS.

ISAIAH lv. 4.—"Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people."

Introduction.—Great variety, beauty, and appropriateness of the Scriptural names of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ is a witness:—

- I. For the declaration of gospel mysteries.
- II. For the confirmation of Scripture truth.
- III. For the decision of practical controversies.

I. Christ is a witness for the declaration, &c.

1. The covenant of salvation (see previous verse).
2. The mystery of gospel righteousness.
3. The doctrine of providence.

II. The confirmation, &c.: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness of the truth."—The obscurities of the law find their interpretation, the types their fulfilment in Him. He verifies the sayings of prophets, and accomplishes all Divine promises.

III. For the decision of, &c.—The mind often perplexed by the different representations of doctrinal truth, sometimes agitated by doubt and unbelief, perhaps troubled by representations of enemies of the truth. Jesus will take away all obscurity: “In thy light shall we see light.”

EDITOR.

ON SEEKING THE LORD.

ISAIAH lv. 6.—“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”

I. When is God to be found—when is he near?

II. How is God to be sought?

I. When is God to be found, &c.—The Lord was found among the Jews of old by his ark, the symbol of his presence; but these words are not limited to them—he addresses those who live in New Testament times.

1. The time of this present life only is that in which God may be found.

2. God is now either in us, or far from us, or near us.

II. How is God to be sought?

1. By frequenting Christian assemblies.

2. By prayer: “Call ye upon him.”

3. By repentance (see verse 7).

PIERRE DU BOSC.

THE CHOICEST FRUIT.

ISAIAH lvii. 19.—“I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord.”

I. The excellency of the object: “Peace, peace.”

II. The universality of the subject: "To him that is," &c.

III. The causality of the agent: "I create."

IV. The facility of the accomplishment: "The fruit of the lips."

I. The excellency, &c.—The mystical sense of these words is the vocation of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ; their literal sense refers to the restoration of the Jews.

II. The universality, &c.—The wicked are expressly excluded (ver. 20, 21.)

III. The causality, &c.: "I create."—Creation is God's *peculiar* act—God's *immediate* act—a merciful act—an act whereby *something is produced out of nothing*—an *irresistible* act—an *instantaneous* act.

IV. The facility of the accomplishment.—God would by a word of command accomplish peace. This is peculiar to Deity—his *word* is the *work*, and his most glorious operations "the fruit of the lips." It had been the fruit of his lips in promising, and therefore should be the work of his hands in performing.

If we refer the fruit of the lips to man, it may be understood either of our prayers or praises, or both. Peace should be the subject of earnest prayer, the subject of grateful praise.

NATH. HARDY, 1660.

POOR AND CONTRITE SPIRITS THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOUR.

ISAIAH lxvi. 2.—"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

I. Let us inquire into the import of each of these characters.

I. The poor; that is,—

1. He who is deeply sensible of his own insufficiency, and that nothing but the enjoyment of God can make him happy.
2. This spiritual purity implies deep humility and self-abasement.
3. He is sensible of his need of the influences of Divine grace.
4. He is deeply conscious of his need of the righteousness of Christ.
5. He is an importunate beggar at the throne of grace.

II. Contrite in spirit.—Literally, *contrition*, signifies breaking, bruising. Sin is a burden that breaks and crushes him, he feels sore under it—broken with fears.

III. Trembleth at my word.—A tender sense of the great things of the Word, and a heart easily impressed with them.

II. The Divine regard bestowed upon them.—He does not look as a careless spectator, as a father, a friend, a benefactor. His looks are *efficacious*. He looks upon them *with acceptance*. He looks upon them *with pleasure*. He looks *with compassion*. He looks upon them *individually*.

Consider:—The perfection and condescension of God as illustrated by this subject. If it be so great a happiness to have God for our patron, what is it to be out of his favour?

PRESIDENT DAVIES.

VAIN THOUGHTS.

JEREMIAH iv. 14.—“How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?”

I. The characteristics of vain thoughts.

1. Those from which we do not and cannot reap any good.

2. Those which cannot associate with useful and valuable thoughts.
 3. Such as it is found absolutely necessary to drive out, in order to attend to serious matters.
 4. Thoughts dwelling largely and habitually on trifling things.
 5. Those that trifle with important things.
 6. Such as are fickle.
 7. Those pertinaciously fixed upon an unworthy object.
 8. Thoughts that will return to an object known to be unprofitable.
 9. Such as are on speculative fancies.
 10. Those bent on schemings of worldly felicity.
- II. The correctives of vain thoughts.
1. The substantial state of the mind must be cured of vanity.
 2. It will be beneficial to have specified subjects of serious interest to employ the thoughts.
 3. Self-detection in the act of sin.
 4. Recourse to acts of devotion.
 5. Practical employment.
 6. Communion with thoughts of wise and good.

JOHN FOSTER.

THE BITTERNESS OF SIN.

JEREMIAH iv. 18.—“It is bitter, it reacheth unto thine heart.”

The prophet is here speaking of the sin of Israel; and the same may be said of sin in general, whensoever and by whomsoever committed: “It is bitter.” This character belongs to it, as it is against God, a breach of his holy law, an affront to his majesty, a contradiction to his truth, holiness, justice, an abuse of his goodness and mercy; and it produces terrible effects.

I. Sin is bitter; and it is so, both comparatively and absolutely considered.

1. It is so comparatively.—We read of gall, wormwood, death, as bitter. Sin is more disgusting, loathsome, and terrible than these. Death, though an enemy to nature, is a friend to grace; but sin is the foe of both.
2. It is so absolutely.—“The gall of bitterness.” Because it is exceedingly distasteful to God. It is very odious to God’s people. It makes work for a bitter repentance, either in this world or in the next.

II. “It reacheth to thine heart.”

1. It defiles it. It depraves every faculty and power of the soul, darkens understanding, enslaves will, stupifies conscience, alienates affections from all good.
2. It disquiets it. It gives many a deadly wound. Great horror of conscience. Extreme anguish of mind. The greatest cruelties of greatest tyrants are more endurable than the lashes of conscience.
3. It ruins and damns it. Sin draws God’s sword. It gives life to the undying worm, and kindles the unquenchable fire.

Application.

1. Is there so much bitterness in sin? Be content to take the most bitter remedies. Say, Lord, afflict me, slay me, do what thou wilt, but deliver me from the tyrannical power of sin in this world, and the wrath due to it in the next.
2. As sin reaches to the heart, what a mercy it is that grace reaches it too. Sin weakens it; grace strengthens it. Sin defiles; grace purifies. Sin hardens; grace softens. Sin wounds; grace heals. Sin subjects to Divine wrath; grace restores to Divine favour.

B. BEDDOME.

GRADATIONS OF TRIAL.

JEREMIAH xii. 5.—“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and

if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

The prophet Jeremiah had commenced his ministerial labours in the town of Anathoth, the place of his nativity; disheartened by the unbelief of his townspeople, and terrified by their threats, he appeals to the Most High, and receives in reply the inquiries of the text, "If thou hast run," &c.

The allusion to "the footmen" refers to the ancient practice of employing couriers and posts, such as are now employed in the East, for the transit of letters. "Contending with horses" refers to the custom of having men on foot, to accompany and even precede royal chariots. Thus Samuel told the Israelites that their future king "would take of their sons to run before his chariots." "The land of peace" was the quiet rural retirement of the prophet's dwelling. "The swelling of Jordan" was the rise of that river, caused by the melting of the snow on Hermon and Lebanon, when the fords either became impassable, or required the greatest caution on the traveller's part. Another circumstance which rendered the swellings of Jordan dangerous, arose from the fact that, between the natural bank of the river and the freshet mark, there grew reeds and jungle which afforded covert to lions and other wild beasts; these were driven from their lair by the rising of the waters, and became formidable antagonists to the wayfarer. Thus the king of Babylon is compared to "a lion coming up out of the swelling of Jordan."

The meaning of the text, then, is as follows:—If the lighter provocations thou hast had to encounter have subdued thy spirit, how wilt thou encounter greater troubles to come? If the men of Anathoth have exhausted thy courage, what will become of thee in conflict with the men of Jerusalem, or in thy final exile to Egypt?

Apply the text,

- I. To those who are discouraged in the service of God by trifling difficulties.
- II. To those who have succumbed to feeble temptations.
- III. To such as have desponded at the presence of slight afflictions.
- IV. To the large class who have failed to gain spiritual profit under favourable providences.

EDITOR.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART.

JEREMIAH xvii. 9.—“The heart is deceitful above all things.”

- I. Men impose on themselves respecting their own character, or the heart practises deception in regard to its natural tendency and disposition. Men do not attribute to themselves the character given of the human heart in the Bible. The Christian does. Is it not possible that your heart deceives you? If the Bible be true, there is no such native excellence of character as you suppose that you possess. Multitudes who once had the same view of themselves, have been convinced of their error. Nothing is easier than self-deception.
- II. Men deceive themselves in regard to their real attachments.
- III. The heart is deceitful in regard to its power of resisting temptation.
- IV. In its promises of reformation and amendment. Improvement.
 1. There is danger of losing the soul.

2. You have a heart which is not to be trusted.
3. Wake from all delusions to the reality of your condition.

ALBERT BARNES.

THE GOOD OF EARLY OBEDIENCE.

LAMENTATIONS iii. 27.—“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.”

A literal yoke is an instrument of wood or iron, fitted to the necks of animals, either to tame them, or work them, or punish them. It is metaphorically used in Scripture for marriage, and the labour and obedience of servants. There is a threefold yoke which it is not good to bear:—The yoke of Mosaic ceremonies—of antichristian impositions—of sin and lust. But then there is a threefold yoke which it is good for a man that he bear in his youth:—

I. The yoke of affliction.

II. The yoke of the Spirit in conviction of sin.

III. The yoke of subjection and obedience to Christ.

I. The yoke of affliction.

1. Affliction is good for all kinds of men.
2. It is enlightening.
3. It is preparatory to grace and conversion.
4. It strengthens spiritual convictions.
5. It stirs up the heart to prayer.
6. It teaches the emptiness of the creature.

II. The yoke of conviction of sin.—The Spirit of God convinces the soul of the evil of sin, and of exposure to the wrath of God. This is heavy and burdensome, galling and wounding. It is essential to sound conversion. It is good to come under this yoke betimes. For that profession of religion which is not founded on conviction of sin will never hold

out. The sooner it is borne, the easier it is borne. Those who are subjects of early convictions grow rich in grace.

III. The yoke of subjection and obedience to Christ.

1. Jesus Christ has his yoke. It is pure, spiritual, strict, extensive, laborious, lasting.
2. Why are the commands of Christ called a yoke? (1.) With respect to the corrupt nature of man, which counts them so. (2.) With regard to the strength of the obligations involved.
3. Why is it the concern of every one to take up the yoke of Christ in youth? (1.) Because of the call of God. (2.) The claims of Christ. (3.) The invitation of the Spirit. (4.) Sin gets great advantage by its continuance. (5.) The earlier, the easier. (6.) It has the kindest acceptance with God. (7.) It is the fittest season for religion. (8.) The danger of delay.

MATTHEW MEAD, 1681.

THE CONFESSION OF TRUE PENITENCE.

DANIEL ix. 8.—“O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face.”

I. Shame may be considered in a threefold light:—

1. As sinful.—There is a criminal shame, a being ashamed of that which is good.
2. As penal: “They shall see and be ashamed.”
3. As penitential.

II. On what accounts the prophet might say, “Unto us belongeth,” &c.

1. Persons are often ashamed of the meanness of their origin.
2. Personal deformity is a ground of shame.
3. Poverty.
4. Want of understanding.

5. Frustrated hopes and expectations.

6 All sin is a ground of shame.

III. Conclusion.

1. Let us seek after the disposition here expressed.

2. Let us join these two together:—

“Unto us belongeth confusion of face.”

“Unto the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses.”

B. BEDDOME.

AN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS.

DANIEL ix. 24.—“And to bring in everlasting righteousness.”

I. What are we to understand by the word “righteousness?”—It sometimes means moral honesty—sometimes inward holiness—sometimes, as in the text, *imputed righteousness*, or the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ to be imputed to poor sinners upon their believing. By this righteousness I understand all that Christ hath done and suffered;—Christ’s active, and Christ’s passive obedience. It might be called a *blessed* righteousness; it might be called a *glorious* righteousness; it might be called an *invaluable* righteousness; but the angel calls it an *everlasting* righteousness.

II. On what account is it called “everlasting?”

1. Because it was intended to extend to mankind even from eternity.
2. Because its efficacy took place immediately after Adam’s fall.
3. Because its efficacy is to continue till time shall be no more.
4. Because its benefits will endure to everlasting life.

III. What are we to understand by his bringing it in?

1. Our Lord’s promulgation of it in the world.

2. His working it out in his life and death.
3. Its communication, through the Holy Spirit, to the heart.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

GOD'S END AND DESIGN IN AFFLICTION.

HOSEA v. 15.—“I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.”

There is nothing we more hardly learn, and whereof we have more need to be taught, than to judge aright concerning our own dealing with God, and God's dealing with us; to know and acknowledge the folly and perverseness of our ways, and the goodness and wisdom of God's ways. To teach these is evidently this prophet's aim.

I. The procuring cause of God's afflicting his people.—Sin and impenitence.

1. We see how unwilling God is to afflict his people.
2. Whence the many sufferings and miseries of the church arise.

II. God's way of afflicting his people: “I will go and return,” &c.

The withdrawing of his gracious presence is the source of greatest suffering to the church.

III. The end of God in thus afflicting his people: “Till they acknowledge,” &c.

1. God's intention.—To bring them to sorrow for their offences and ingenuous confession.
2. The power of these means for accomplishing it.—There is no returning to God but in forsaking sin—affliction brings men to this: “They will seek me early.” (1.) It concentrates the thoughts of a man upon himself.

(2.) It drives a man off from worldly comforts and brings him back to God.

ABP. LEIGHTON. 1670.

INCONSTANCY IN RELIGION.

HOSEA vi. 4.—“O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.”

I. Consider the causes of this wretched inconstancy.

1. Men do not consider as they ought the nature of the great change.
2. They are not sufficiently enlightened on the reasons on which they should act.
3. They do not consider the pains they must take and the time they must spend.
4. They are but half-resolved.
5. They do not exercise caution and vigilance in avoiding temptations.
6. They neglect instrumental duties of religion, as secret prayer, &c.

II. The certainty that ineffective purposes of amendment will not be accepted instead of true repentance and holiness of life.

1. The gospel requires nothing else than repentance and true holiness.
2. A mere transient goodness is not gospel repentance and holiness.
3. God will not dispense saving mercy on any other terms than those set forth in the gospel.

III. What method we should take if we would not only begin in the ways of religion, but continue in them to the end.

1. Use care to avoid errors before mentioned.
2. Frequently meditate on great truths of religion.
3. Often renew holy resolutions.

4. Bend our chief force against besetting sins.
5. Reflect on uncertainty and shortness of life.

IV. Consider instances of inconstancy in good men.

1. They are apt to change as to diligence and activity in the Christian life.
2. Relax vigilance and circumspection.
3. Decline of sensibility of conscience.
4. Stronger worldly affections.
5. A spirit of devotion not sustained.

Conclusion:—Fix in your minds a lively apprehension of the great peace and pleasure which attend an even course of piety. Have your eye upon the first tendencies of the heart to wander from God.

H. GROVE, 1740.

SPIRITUAL DECLENSION.

HOSEA vii. 9.—“Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.”

The days of the life of this prophet were dark and tragical. His public labours commenced in the reign of that monarch to whose name is attached an indelible stigma: “Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.” The prosperity of Israel had vanished. Idolatry prevailed over the ten tribes. The restraints of law were broken, and the claims of truth ignored. Peace and purity vacated the land. Might and murder became supporters of the throne. Foreign invasions mingle with domestic broils, and prolonged anarchy is harbinger of captivity. The pathetic words of our text depict the unconscious decrepitude of the nation—its resources sapped to their centre, and its crown of glory withering in premature decay. But there is no

need to limit them to ancient Israel; they serve too well to set forth the stages of spiritual declension.

I. The condition deplored.

II. The causes in which it originates.

III. The prevention and cure.

- I. The condition, &c.—It is a sad case that in which deadly disease fastens on a vital organ, and the unhappy victim remains day after day unconscious of his doom, till at last the discovery is made when remedy is hopeless. Painful the condition of that man whose commercial affairs seem to others to be prosperous, when they are in reality the subject of concealed but certain decline. Such conditions have their counterpart in the spiritual life. Men do not all at once subside from a condition of holy life to a state of entire departure from God. The stages of spiritual decay are secret, subtle. Perhaps it is true of some professors who now hear me.—“No!” “No!” say a hundred hearts. “Thank God! that is not my condition.”—Stay—“He knoweth it not.” If Delilah can keep that infatuated hero asleep till the Philistines approach, they will do their work. Oh sad awakening: “He wist not that the Lord had departed.” Better, far better to discover every inconsistency of character, every beginning of evil, than to wait till the fatal weakness reveals itself in an hour of trial that requires the greatest strength.
- II. The causes.—Strangers in the text are the heathen—the spiritual locusts that made Israel barren as the wilderness. 1. Idolatry.—Too great delight in things which afford present peace. 2. Worldly prosperity.—Demas, while young, devout, humble, zealous, constant in church assemblies. In these palmy days of unpersecuted profession, take heed of gray hairs. Spiritual pride is one; self-complacency is one; sometimes most trifling causes—change of

residence. 3. Neglect of secret prayer.—Prevailing reluctance—postponement for inferior pursuits—disposition to admit excuses—performance in a cold, lukewarm spirit. 4. Neglect of Scriptures and means of grace.

III. The prevention and cure.

Prevention:—From conviction that all sufficiency is from God—nearness to Christ—watchfulness over graces—diligent, prayerful use of means.

Cure:—Penitential confession before God—lowest self-abasement and renewed self-surrender—the cross of Jesus Christ.

EDITOR.

PREPARATION TO MEET GOD.

AMOS iv. 12.—“Prepare to meet thy God.”

From these impressive and solemn words, I propose to give an answer to the following inquiries:—

- I. To whom may the command be considered as addressed?
- II. Why should a preparation be made to meet God?
- III. In what way are we to prepare?
- IV. When should it be done?
- I. To whom may the command be addressed?—To all who are unprepared.
 1. Those who have designedly banished the subject from their minds.
 2. Those who have deferred it to a future time.
 3. Those who have been so pre-occupied with other things as to neglect this.
 4. Those who have given a slight, but unsatisfactory consideration of it.
- II. Why should a preparation, &c.
 1. Because it is to be our first interview face to face.

2. We shall meet in very solemn circumstances.
3. We go there on a very solemn errand.
4. He has solemnly commanded it.
5. Because when we meet him, it will be too late to prepare.

III. In what way are we to prepare?

1. It is necessary to be reconciled to him.
2. It is necessary to be born again.
3. There must be true repentance, and true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. When should it be done!—*Now*.

ALBERT BARNES.

THE SECURE ALARMED.

AMOS vi. 1.—“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.”

There is something very agreeable and desirable in *ease*. Even external ease is valuable; and we are ready to pronounce the man happy whose connexions and affairs are all prosperous and peaceful. But what is external ease without bodily? What is bodily ease without mental? And yet this tranquillity is too common; and to distrust it is the design of this discourse,—a design not only justified by inspired example, but demanded by ministerial fidelity, and required by love to your souls.

I. Who are those that deserve this charge?

1. Some “are at ease in Zion” from selfish insensibility.
2. Some are so from infidel presumption.—This kind of ease is obtained with difficulty. It is partial, and liable to interruption. The less liable it is to be disturbed, the more awful. It is fatal.
3. Some are so from **vain confidence**.—It keeps them from looking after salvation. It will terminate in woful surprise and disappointment.
4. Some are at ease in Zion from practical indifference.

II. Inferences derived from the subject.

1. Surely they are highly criminal who countenance and promote such a state.
2. Let none be troubled when they find their connexions distressed and alarmed with a sense of sin and danger.
3. There is consolation for those that are distressed in Zion.

The discouragements of gracious souls are clearly distinguishable from unbelief; and arise,

1. From their view of the importance of the concern.
2. From a conviction of the deeeitfulness of their own hearts.
3. From a recollection that many live and die in their delusion.

W. JAY.

JUDGMENT AND MERCY.

AMOS ix. 9.—“For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.”

In wrath God has always remembered mercy. His judgments in the earth have never been so unmitigated, but that they have been relieved by some signal instances of sparing goodness. Illustrations:—Flood; cities of the plain; prophecies threatening Israel.

I. The determination avowed.

II. The security promised.

III. Inferences.

I. Determination avowed: “For, lo, I will command,” &c.

1. The comparison employed points to the only distinction of character recognised in Scripture—the righteous and the wicked; corn and chaff.
2. The character of the individual Christian is not one of unmingled purity. Grace, however, is not depreciated, because of the mixture of evil; as also, sin is not ennobled or excused, because of grace in the heart.

3. The mixture of character which exists in the church of God.

4. Consider the process—sifting—in its nature, its object, its necessity.

II. The security promised: "Yet shall not the least grain, &c.

1. The process of sifting has exclusive reference to wheat. If there be nothing but chaff, there will be no such process.

2. The security engaged arises: (1.) From God's care over his people in affliction. (2.) This care arises out of his love for them. (3.) This love and care extend to all, even the least.

III. Inferences.

1. The safety of true believers amidst surrounding troubles.

2. Learn to recognise the hand of God in all events.

ANONYMOUS.

THE PRAYER OF JONAH.

JONAH ii. 4.—"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

God has been worshipped in strange places; but no place can be unsuitable where he gives the spirit of prayer and a sense of his presence. Of all temples, Jonah's was the most extraordinary, and the worshipper the greatest of prodigies. Though this worship took place at the bottom of the sea, yet the Holy Ghost has faithfully reported it for our instruction. As the harmony of music is made up of two sorts of sounds, the grave and the acute, both of which are requisite to its full effect, so this strain of devotion is compounded of two kinds of affection. On the one side are terrors, dangers, and dejection; on the other, comforts and hopes of the Holy Spirit as sweet and genuine as could be conceived. "Then I said, I

am cast out of thy sight, *yet* I will look again," &c. "The waters compassed me about," &c.; "*yet* hast thou brought up my life from the pit." "My soul fainted within me, *yet* I remembered the Lord." Thus fear and hope, mourning and joy, turbulence and peace, mingle together, or come by alternate successions; and there is no separating these two sorts of feeling from our earthly experience.

I. We contemplate Jonah's faith languishing.

II. Jonah's faith reviving.

III. Conclusions.

I. Jonah's faith languishing.—He takes his lamentable complaint,

1. From the condition in which he was placed.
2. From his spiritual condition.
3. Aggravated by his own just demerit.
4. A fully awakened sense of his own guilt.

II. Jonah's faith reviving.

1. He begins by casting away all causes of discouragement: "Yet," &c.
2. His faith looks to the true source of help.
3. His faith expressed itself in prayer.

III. Conclusions.

1. Observe the strange mixture of mercy and judgment in the conduct of God toward his erring servant.
2. However strange and mysterious at the time, yet God had most ample motives for what he did. (1.) The sanctification of the prophet. (2.) A sign to the Ninevites. (3.) A type of the Saviour's death and resurrection.
3. Motives against the doubtful, languishing condition to which we are prone. (1.) It distrusts Divine promises. (2.) It casts contempt on God's providence. (3.) It contemns our Saviour's sacrifice.

ANONYMOUS.

WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD.

MICAH vi. 8.—“And to walk humbly with thy God.”

I. What it is to walk with God.

II. What it is to walk *humbly* with God.

III. That this is the great duty, and most valuable concernment of believers.

I. What it is, &c.

1. Some things are required to it:—(1.) Peace and agreement (Amos iii. 3.) (2.) Oneness of design. God's aim is his own glory; so must it be of those who would walk with him. (3.) Aiming at the enjoyment of God as our reward. (4.) He must have a living principle.

2. Some things required in it:—(1.) Our obedience must be in harmony with covenant relation to God. (2.) It must be universal. (3.) It must be with delight.

II. What it is to walk humbly, &c.

We must humble ourselves to the law of his grace and the law of his providence.

1. In subjection to the law of grace:—(1.) We shall confess that whatever we have of God is in a way of mere mercy and grace. (2.) That righteousness is not obtained by any performance or obedience of ours. (3.) We must accept a righteousness which is not our own. (4.) We must pursue obedience with not less zeal than if it were on old covenant footing. (5.) We must feel that we have no strength for the least duties. (6.) We must be content to have the sharpest afflictions with the strictest obedience.
2. In subjection to the law of Providence. We must humble ourselves, (1.) To God's sovereignty. (2.) To his wisdom. (3.) To his righteousness. (4.) To his goodness.

Visible confusion—unspeakable variety—sudden alterations—deep distresses in Providence, demand this humility.

III. That this is the great duty, &c.

- I. It gives God the glory:—(1.) Of the doctrine of grace. (2.) Of the power of grace. (3.) Of the law of grace; that he is a King obeyed. (4.) Of his justice. (5.) Of his kingdom.

2. God delights in the humble walk of his people.
3. It is the only path of comfort, peace, prosperity.

DR J. OWEN, 1650.

THE VOICE OF THE ROD.

MICAH vi. 9.—“Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.”

- I. The rod described.
- II. The hand that wields it.
- III. The voice of the rod.
- IV. The evils of inattention.
- I. The rod.—It signifies Divine chastisements, which are either:—
 1. A rod of correction and discipline ; or,
 2. A rod of punishment and anger ; or,
 3. Of destruction.
- II. The hand that, &c. (Amos iii. 6.)
- III. The voice of the rod.
 1. It tells of our sins.
 2. It declares God's hatred of sin.
 3. It calls to repentance.
- IV. The evils of inattention.
 1. God will multiply affliction.
 2. He will abandon and leave the reprobate.

PIERRE DU BOSQ.

JOINING THE CHURCH.

ZECHARIAH viii. 23.—“We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”

- I. The church of Jesus Christ is a society distinct and separate from the world.

- II. The presence of God is the glory of the Christian church.
- III. It is binding upon all disciples of Jesus to unite themselves to his church.
- IV. It is obligatory upon the church to present an inviting aspect to the world.

EDITOR.

THE SPIRIT PROMISED.

ZECHARIAH xii. 10.—“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.”

The emphatic formula, “In that day,” is like a Divine finger pointing to the future kingdom of Christ. Our text evidently belongs to him and to his government. And if this were not the instant conclusion of the mind intuitively recognising what has been fulfilled, it would be proved by the connection. When was “the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness” but by the bleeding death of Christ? When were those wounded hands exhibited? When was the potter’s field bought? When did the eternal God call out his sword of justice? When did men look on him whom they had pierced? These things only found their fulfilment in the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and therefore this is *that day*. We are in the position to enjoy the promise, “That day is ours.” This promise has been fulfilled. The Spirit came down upon the day of Pentecost, and has not ceased to come down in the darkest ages.

- I. The nature of the Spirit here promised.
- II. The motives which should lead us to seek its fulfilment.

I. The nature, &c.

1. The spirit of grace and of supplications is a very humble and contrite spirit.
2. The spirit of grace, &c., is the spirit of faith.
3. This spirit is one of earnest and intense desire.
4. This spirit is of an eminently holy character.
5. This is a very submissive and confiding spirit.
6. A spirit of devout anticipation.

II. Motives, &c.

1. Because it is the true cause of the advancement of the kingdom of Christ.
2. There is the strongest reason for believing that it will be bestowed.
3. It will sweeten the cup of life.
4. Consider how vital is its influence in connection with all the means of grace.

ANONYMOUS.

THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST.

ZECARIAH xiii. 6.—“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

This is one of a numerous class of Scripture passages in which an accommodated sense has obscured the original and literal meaning. It is of the first importance that we do not sacrifice the obvious interpretation of the Word of God to any favourite adaptation, however excellent it may appear. Before, therefore, we occupy our thoughts in the channel which they habitually take at the utterance of this text, let us look at its literal bearing. As Moses had predicted, in the later days of the Jewish commonwealth, a host of false prophets arose. They professed to have revelations from idol gods; they uttered smooth things, and cried “Peace, peace,” when there was no peace. The writings

of the Hebrew seers are full of complaints of the mischief wrought by these impostors. Zechariah was commissioned to pronounce their utter extirpation. In this season of investigation, one is accosted who falls under suspicion. He rejects the accusation; but there are cuttings and lacerations on his hands, similar to those self-inflicted wounds of the priests of Baal; and the charge is pressed again, "What are these wounds in thine hands?" The reply is (whether genuine or counterfeit), "These wounds are not badges of an idolatrous shrine, but marks of correction I received among my own people." Having thus explained the literal meaning of the text, we see no reason for departing from the customary mode of appropriating it to spiritual purposes.

I. A meditation at the cross.

II. An inquiry in the church.

I. A meditation at the cross.—The particular transactions of Calvary are passed for ever, but they have a practical application commensurate with eternity. We dare not pass by that spot like the thoughtless idlers, who gaped and wondered; or like the refuse of the guilty city, who came for entertainment to the spectacle. Those wounds are still open to faith. They kindle hope in the wretched—strengthen the feeble—and impart a living savour to our devotions. Unbelief cannot lay its cold hand upon the wounds of Christ; but faith casts its loving eye there, and asks, "What are these wounds?" While we cultivate this spirit of inquiry, we hear the prophet declaring, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed." The peculiar preciousness of this sacrifice consists in the superior dignity of his person. No lapse of time can exhaust the virtue of this

sacrifice. There is such efficacy in the wounds of Christ, that, seen by faith, they will support under every burden, and revive all defection of graces.

Is your heart pressed down and despondent under guilt?

“What are these wounds?”

Do you complain of want of love to Jesus? “What are these wounds?”

Do you wish to feel the bitterness of sin more keenly?

“What are these wounds?”

Are you filled with unbelief of Divine promises? “What are these wounds?”

Are you fretful and impatient under trial? “What are these wounds.”

II. An inquiry in the church.—The church is the house of Christ's friends. Yet even here he has been often wounded, as he was in the house of Caiaphas.

1. Through his perfect sympathy with his suffering members.
2. By the inconsistencies of professed believers.
3. This may also be the complaint of an individual Christian.
4. This complaint may be that of the church herself—lukewarmness—worldliness—dissension and strife.

EDITOR.

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF MEEKNESS.

MATTHEW v. 5.—“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”

Blessedness is that which all men desire, the sun which every eye looks upon. And in this sermon of our Saviour, it streams down upon us in several beams,—in poverty of spirit, in mourning and meekness—which seem to us as dark thick clouds, but are beams of light to the kingdom of heaven, to comfort, and the

inheritance of the earth. Meekness stands after poverty of spirit and mourning, which usher it in. This is a virtue which is expressly to be learnt of Christ: "Learn of me; for I am meek," &c. It is a hard lesson to quench anger, and to restrain all desire of revenge.

I. What this virtue is which bears so goodly an inscription?

II. That it is a virtue most necessary for a Christian.

III. The reason which the Saviour gives why the meek are blessed: "For they shall inherit the earth."

I. What this meekness is.

1. In its nature—not hypocritical—as meek Joab—meek Absalom—meek Judas. Revenge is never more cruel than when it speaks in a still voice, and with the dialect of love. It consists in repressing sentiments of anger under personal contempt, cruelty, and persecution—in the forgiveness of injuries. There is no danger of excess here.
2. In its subject.—This does not strike the sword out of the hand of the magistrate; it is every man as a private man.
3. In its object.—In dealing with those who are in error—in reproving wickedness. When we fight against sin and error we must make Christ our pattern. He levels his hand against the disease, not the man, and never strikes but where he heals.

II. That it is a virtue most necessary, &c.

1. The church of Christ is a congregation of meek ones.
2. It is most proper to Christianity, because human reason never discovered the benefit, pleasure, and glory of it.
3. The neglect of this grace has hindered the growth of Christianity.
4. It is necessary for personal, individual advantage. It is a concomitant of other graces.

III. The title the meek have to the earth.

It is not by the sword the church conquers the earth, but by love and meekness; healing every malady; binding up every wound; wiping off disgrace; triumphing over evil. These are the riches of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria. Thus we find rest unto the soul, which pride, animosity, and rage could never purchase.

ANTHONY FARINDON, 1670.

THE PURE IN HEART.

MATTHEW v. 8.—“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

Besides the excellence of our Saviour's sermon on the mount, as it contains a summary of Christian morals, the place, the preacher, the manner, the introduction, are all of them very observable.

The place was a mountain, wherein the publication of the gospel answered to the delivery of the law; but there was conformity in little else. This great and glorious person we should hear with reverent, modest, obedient hearts; the greater his dignity, the greater our guilt if we reject him. His manner was familiar,—no pomp, no awful ensigns of majesty—all gentleness and condescension.

The sermon is introduced with a roll of beatitudes. The end regulates the means, and therefore it is first treated of. Thus, opening of the book of Psalms: “Blessed,” &c.

I. A very great privilege proposed by our Saviour to his followers: “They shall see God.” There is a twofold vision of God: one, the privilege of the believer; the other, of the glorified saint.

1. Consider the blessedness of seeing God in this life.—It consists in a saving knowledge of him—a comfortable

sense of his presence, enjoyed in the directions of Providence, in power against temptations, invigorations of Divine grace—a constant joyous intercourse with him, on their part, by contemplation, love, prayer, and praise; on his part, by means of grace and measures of grace.—This is the most certain enjoyment upon earth—most satisfying. It involves the hope of complete happiness hereafter—it secures a competency of other good things—communicates greater value to the enjoyments of life—it supplies loss of other comforts—best support under evils—fortifies against fear of death.

2. The blessedness of seeing God in heaven—His being, attributes, and works, will be seen in clear light. Our knowledge will be more extensive—more distinct—more full. A consciousness of his presence much superior to that we have now—a constant joyous intercourse with the Divine Redeemer. The perfection of God—the high faculties of enjoyment—the perfection of the pleasure—the absence of all impediments, (no disorders of body, no self-dissatisfaction, no unsatisfied desires, no doubts or fears)—the transforming power of the vision, all constitute this the highest happiness of which the creature is capable.

II. The qualification required for this enjoyment: Purity of heart.

1. What is meant by purity? It is opposed to mixture, and bespeaks sincerity; or is opposed to pollution, and signifies holiness. The heart is represented as the seat of this purity, to distinguish it from federal purity, legal purity, ceremonial purity, external purity, and to show that all the powers of the reasonable soul must be pure—mind and imagination—conscience—will—affections.
2. The necessity of this qualification. (1.) The pure in heart are only worthy of the happiness involved—they only fulfil the Christian character—they only resemble God—they only truly obey him—they only honour Divine omniscience. (2.) The pure in heart are alone capable of this happiness. Impurity incapacitates for vital communications with God, especially for heavenly

communications; aversion to God places men at a distance from him. Impurity implies a habit of soul incompatible with true happiness; an impure heart is attended with a guilty conscience.

Application:—Try your hopes of heaven by this rule. Follow after purity of life. Labour after purifying graces. Implore the sanctifying Spirit. Contemplate patterns of purity.

HENRY GROVE, 1742.

SECRET PRAYER.

MATTHEW vi. 6.—“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

The sense of this text is plain. The Saviour is re-proving the ostentation and pride of hypocrites for the public manner in which they offered their prayers. In contradistinction from them he directs his disciples to go into a place where they would be alone with God; where no eye could see them but his eye, and no ear could hear but his ear, and there to pray to him who dwells in a world unseen by mortals.

I. The duty of secret prayer.

1. The text may be regarded as having all the force of a command.
2. It is more by example than by precept that this duty is enforced in Scripture.
3. Secret prayer is essential, because we have wants which can be presented before God in no other way.
4. No times are specified for the performance of this duty.

II. The proper mode and seasons of secret prayer.

1. There should be, if possible, a place to which we may retire and be alone with God.

2. There should be set times.

3. The following are among the appropriate seasons:—
The early morning hour; evening; times of perplexity and enlargement; seasons of strong temptation; when the Holy Spirit prompts.

III. The rewards and advantages of secret prayer.

It furnishes the best test of piety. What is the "open reward?" Humble piety; power over the world; superiority to passion and raging lusts; equability of mind; patience in trial; the crown of glory.

Remarks.—Are you, who are professors of Christianity, obeying the command of Jesus Christ? You who were early taught to pray, but have now no daily communion with God, resume that forgotten habit. Deathless being, pray! Young man, pray! Child of pious parents, pray! Aged man, pray! Travellers to eternity, pray!

ALBERT BARNES.

NO MAN EVER WENT TO HEAVEN WHOSE HEART WAS NOT THERE BEFORE.

MATTHEW vi. 21.—"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

These words concerning man's heart being fixed upon his treasure or chief good, may be considered—

- I. As an entire proposition in themselves.
- II. As an argument relating to a foregoing precept.
- I. As an entire proposition.
 1. Every man has something which he accounts his treasure or chief good. This is apparent, (1.) From the activity of man's mind. (2.) From the method of his acting.
 2. Whatsoever a man places his treasure in, upon that he places his heart also. (1.) A restless and laborious en-

deavour to possess himself of it. (2.) He places his whole delight in it. (3.) He supports his mind from it in all his troubles. (4.) For the preservation of that he will part with all besides.

II. As an argument, &c.—Two rivals for the affections, God and the world: it is impossible for a man to fix his heart on both.

1. Consider how far inferior the world is to man's heart.
2. Consider it absolutely. All worldly enjoyments are, (1.) Perishing. (2.) Out of our power.
3. Heaven is the exchange God gives for man's heart. Its enjoyments are, (1.) Indefectible. (2.) Endless. (3.) Not to be taken away.

The improvement of these particulars is to convince us of the extreme vanity of most men's pretences to religion.

DE SOUTH.

THE GOLDEN RULE.

MATTHEW vii. 12. —“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

When our blessed Lord took upon him the public office of a prophet, he found it was not only necessary to instruct men in the sacred mysteries of religion, but he employed much of his ministry also to teach them the practice of social virtue. In the heathen world the rules of morality were in a great measure lost, as well as the rules of piety and worship; and the Jews had grossly corrupted both the one and the other. He knew that the nature of man was corrupt, his passions strong, his memory frail, and that he would be ready to neglect or forget his various sacred precepts; and therefore he thought it proper to give one short and comprehensive rule of equity, to regulate all our con-

duct, that should be written, as it were, in our very souls: and this is contained in the words of the text.

I. What is the true meaning of this Divine rule?

II. What is the special argument that our Lord uses in order to enforce it.

III. Wherein its particular excellences appear.

IV. Reflections.

I. What is the true meaning, &c.—Some selfish, necessitous, and unreasonable persons may expect more from us than the rule obliges us to perform: a timorous and weak conscience may think itself bound by this rule to perform some instances of kindness which are utterly unreasonable and unrequired, and which might be injurious to ourselves, or our families, or to the rest of mankind. (Illustrations.) The true meaning of this law is,—that we practise toward our neighbour in such a manner as our hearts and consciences would think it reasonable he should practise towards us in the like case.

II. What special argument, &c.—“This is the law and the prophets.” It is as if he had said, “If ye would practise all the duties that ye owe to your fellow-creatures, and fulfil all the laws of the second table in the most compendious and perfect manner, remember and practise this one general direction: deal with the rest of mankind as your conscience judges they should deal with you.”

III. The particular excellences, &c.

1. It is easy to be understood and applied.
2. It is easy to be remembered.
3. It carries greater evidence to the conscience than any other rule of virtue.
4. It includes a powerful motive, and therefore is particularly fitted for practice.
5. It will secure our neighbour from injury and us from guilt.

6. It is as well fitted to awaken repentance as direct to duty.
7. It is most extensive; it suits all stations, ranks, and characters of men.
8. It is most comprehensive; it involves all actions and duties.
9. It is a rule of the highest prudence.
10. It is fitted to make the whole world happy.

IV. Reflection.

1. How compendious the Saviour's method of providing for the practice of all the moral duties enjoined by Moses and the prophets!
2. What divine wisdom to make the golden rule a fundamental law in both the Jewish and Christian systems!
3. Let not disciples of Christ forget this rule.

DR WATTS.

THE STRAIT GATE AND THE NARROW WAY.

MATTHEW vii. 13, 14.—“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

- I. The two ways that Jesus puts before us, and what he says of both.
 - II. The conduct of men in regard to these, such opposite ways.
 - III. The care we should take, the efforts we should use, to walk in the narrow way.
- I. The two ways; one wide and broad, is the way of the world, that to which we are conducted by our passions and lusts; the other, strait and narrow, that which Jesus has tracked out by his doctrine and his life.
 1. There are difficulties in the doctrines the gospel proposes to our faith.

2. Difficulties in the precepts of the gospel.
3. Difficulties in the holiness required by the gospel.
4. Difficulties in our own hearts.
5. Difficulties from the world and the devil.
6. Difficulties in the sacrifices to which religion calls.
7. Difficulties in the progress and perseverance the gospel demands.

II. The conduct of men, &c.—In the broad way we see a crowd—the libertine—the sceptical—the hypocritical—the lovers of pleasure—the unrighteous—the covetous—the drunken—and all who blindly follow their prejudices, passions, and carnal lusts. What an immense multitude it constitutes! Few there be that find the narrow way.

1. In comparison with the number to whom the gospel was first preached.
2. In comparison with the heathen.
3. In comparison with the indifferent, the hypocritical, and the rejecters of it.

III. The care, &c.

Consider 1. The necessity of entering the narrow way. It is the only way.

2. The force of habit.
3. The recompense proposed to those who finish their course in the fear of God.
4. The aid that is promised.

HENRI CHATELAIN, 1730.

THE DIFFICULTY OF SALVATION.

MATTHEW vii. 14.—“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.”

We all admit that the way of salvation is difficult, and yet live as if it were very easy. Be assured that there is no other religion by which man can be saved,

than that of Jesus Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name," &c. Then what is the doctrine of Jesus Christ on the affair of salvation?

I. Consider the figures which Jesus employs when he wishes to instruct us on this subject.

Sometimes it is a feast;—then everything must be left behind to share in it—neither business nor pleasure may form an excuse. Sometimes a warfare;—then we must make preparation, collect troops, sustain attacks, and join in battle. It is a building;—we must count the cost, and spare nothing to complete it. It is a palace, of which the Son of God is the foundation stone;—all that enters the structure must be hewn, polished, carved. It is a vineyard;—the Lord will have no idle workmen. The lost drachma; the whole house must be ransacked. A precious pearl; all must be sold to buy it.—Ten virgins—Stewardship—Seed.

II. Consider the statements on the subject made by the Saviour, when he speaks without figures.

"From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." "Many are called, but few are chosen." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord! shall enter the kingdom of heaven." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."

III. Contrast the exalted perfections of the Saviour's law, with the extreme weakness of our nature.

It demands from us a love of God, that shall be absolute, universal, supreme. It requires a love of our neighbour, so generous as to forget the most atrocious injuries, &c. It claims a faith which makes the Christian ready to lay his head upon the scaffold; a chastity which not only forbids unlawful pleasures, but prevents the desire of them. It wills that we should be persuaded that those are happy who suffer, who weep, who are poor, &c.

Compare all this holiness with the extreme weakness of man. Everything spoilt and corrupted at the source. Conflicts of flesh and spirit. Outward obstacles.

No, no; we must not deceive ourselves—salvation is difficult.

IV. All who have been influenced by a sincere desire to work out their salvation, have perfectly understood this difficulty.

1. Why has God made the way to heaven so difficult? He sets that value on heaven which he pleases: "Who art thou, O man?"
2. The difficulty comes from man: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."
3. All good men have been reconciled to this way of salvation.
4. Difficulties are not to dishearten in a course absolutely necessary. It will be much more difficult to hear the words, "Depart, ye cursed."
5. O Lord, we resort to thee: "Lord, save us, or we perish."

TIMOLEON CHEMINAIS, 1660.

ON PROVIDENCE.

MATTHEW x. 29.—"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

- I. Meditate upon the doctrine of Providence.
 - II. The important uses to which it may be applied.
- I. The doctrine of Providence.—It is involved in difficulties. Objections are adduced from the amazing littleness of creatures, and their consequent insignificance; the unaccountable mixture of good and evil in the world; mysterious operations of Providence.—The text,
1. Justifies the assertion that the Providence of God is comprehensive, and even universal.
 2. The providence of God is especially engaged on behalf of man.

3. It is more particularly directed to the safety, prosperity, and increase of the church.
 4. The special providence of God extends to every individual among his people.
- II. The subject is capable of very extensive and important application.
1. Let me exhort you to recognise the hand of God in all the events of life, good or evil.
 2. There is no such thing as chance.
 3. These considerations suggest submission to God, amidst all trials.
 4. Use this doctrine for comfort and confidence.
 5. Apply it to guide your practice.
 6. It is a powerful argument to recommend religion to the choice of all men.

D. KATTERNS.

WISDOM JUSTIFIED OF HER CHILDREN.

MATTHEW xi. 19.—“But Wisdom is justified of her children.”

- I. Ungodly men are very apt to speak evil of religion and its possessors, upon the weakest and most trivial pretences.
 1. Some demonstrations of the truth of this proposition.—They condemn that in religious men which God commends. They condemn those very things which their own consciences approve of. They condemn religion for the faults of those who pretend to it. They condemn in religious men that which they allow or bear with in themselves or others.
 2. The causes of this malignity.—Ignorance—hatred of God and religion—revenge against religion and religious men—self-defence in sin—love to calumny.
 3. The uses of this fact.—(1.) The shortcomings of religious men do not afford any solid argument against religion. All religious men are not involved in the guilt of them.

Religious men are subject to mistakes and corrupt inclinations as well as others. Religion has washed her hands of the guilt of men's miscarriages. (2.) Caution—To the enemies of religion: Herein thou art the devil's friend—thine own enemy.—To the friends and professors of religion: Abuse not this doctrine to carelessness—learn to live above the censures of evil men—maintain the honour of religion—circumspectly avoid giving advantage to the enemies of religion—avoid all singularity of gesture, habit, language—take heed of injustice, fraud, or falseness, in words, trade, actions—take heed of scandalous sins—relative sins—pride.—To all: Do not judge of religion by the censures and calumnies of wicked men; they are ignorant, interested enemies, and malicious.

II. As it is the duty of all, so it is the practice of those that are wise and good, to justify religion, notwithstanding all the miscarriages of its friends, and censures of its enemies.

1. Why we should justify religion? Because God justifies it by his Word and his works; because the greatest enemies of religion are, and have been, and will be, obliged to justify it; because the devil opposes it—you will never repent of so doing. Religion is highly justified by the sad effects of irreligion. If you do not, the heathen will condemn you.
2. How we should justify religion?—In thought and opinion.—By esteeming it the wisest choice—the justest law—the chief felicity. In words.—Not censuring it, or speaking ill of it or its professors—give no occasion to the wicked to speak against it—be ready to vindicate it when it is traduced. In action.—By the practice of all its principles and duties—especially those which make religion amiable among men.
3. Apply this. (1.) There is no reason why the miscarriage of professors, or the censure of enemies, should beget any dislike of religion. Not the former.—Because it is unreasonable to judge of the ways of God by the practices of men; or to judge of the rule by those

who swerve from it. Not the latter.—Because they are self-condemned, corrupt, prejudiced.

III. Mention, and remove some of the prejudices against religion.

1. The unreasonableness and incredibility of the principles of religion. This objection arises from a vain and proud conceit of a man's own reason. Consider the darkness of men's reason, even in lower things. Consider the unreasonableness of irreligion.
2. The insuperable difficulty of the practice of religion. If it be *true*, the greatest difficulties are reasonable. There are as great difficulties in an ungodly life. Religion is not so difficult as it seems to be.
3. Differences among the professors of religion. They are neither so weighty nor so many as is pretended. They are an evident argument of its truth. They are not so hard, but that a prudent and pious man may find out the truth.
4. The fewness, meanness, folly, and weakness of true Christians. This confronts the wisdom of God. The objection is in a great measure false. Consider the right province of religion—it is to make men wise unto salvation.

MATTHEW POOLE, 1673.

REST PROMISED BY CHRIST.

MATTHEW xi. 28.—“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

- I. The persons addressed.
 - II. The blessing promised.
 - III. The invitation given.
- I. The persons addressed.
 1. The Jews.

2. Miserable sinners.

3. Repenting sinners.

II. The blessing promised: Rest, *i. e.*, Parāon, &c.

1. It is prompt.

2. It is universal in the promise.

3. It is complete and perfect.

III. The invitation given.—Consider,

1. What it requires.

2. To what principle it appeals—the will.

3. From whom it comes.

4. When it ought to be obeyed.

ANONYMOUS.

WEAK GRACE VICTORIOUS.

MATTHEW xii. 20.—“A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.”

Take notice of the object, “A bruised reed;” “smoking flax.” The act, “he shall not break.” The continuance of it, “till he send forth,” &c.

Doctrine.—True, though weak, grace shall be preserved, and in the end prove victorious.

I. The Father is engaged in its preservation. His attributes—love, power, holiness, wisdom, glory.

II. Christ is engaged in this work, as a purchaser; an actual proprietor, by donation, conquest, and mutual consent; as a steward—he has power of authority, ability, and faithfulness.

III. The Holy Spirit is engaged in this business—his mission is to this purpose. His titles, a comforter, &c.

The use of this doctrine:—

For information.—The operations of grace may be inter-

rupted; the comfort of grace may be eclipsed; the habit of inherent grace cannot be lost; grace, though oppressed, will recover itself; the final apostacy of a regenerate man is impossible.

For comfort.—Our state by redemption is better in respect of permanency than Adam's. The state of a regenerate man is as secure as the state of the invisible church. Weak grace, though cause for trouble, is no cause for despondency.

For duty.—How should men labour to get into a state of grace? Examine whether you have grace or not. Let not this doctrine encourage remission of known duties. Admire the grace of God. Acknowledge thy standing and present victories only to be by the grace of God. Let the falls of others make you thankful and compassionate. Despise not small grace in any. Rest not in small degrees of grace. Cherish the breathings of the spirit. Take frequent views of glory.

STEPHEN CHARNOCK, 1660.

THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH.

MATTHEW xii. 42.—“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”

- I. The assertion which our Lord makes respecting himself: “A greater than Solomon,” &c.
- II. The force of the example he relates: “The queen of the south,” &c.
- I. The assertion, &c.—It implies a comparison while it affirms his superiority.
 1. The comparison.—Solomon a type of Christ. (a) As the son of David. (b) As an eminent favourite of God. (c) As to the extent, prosperity, peacefulness, and wisdom

of his government. (*d*) As the builder of the temple.
 (*e*) As a teacher of wisdom.

2. The superiority.—1. Christ was a divine, as well as a human character, not only David's son, but David's Lord. 2. Christ was the antitype, and so, greater than the type; *e.g.* (*a*) The superiority of his government and kingdom—Solomon's temporal, his spiritual. (*b*) The superiority of his teaching. (*c*) The higher glory of the spiritual temple, and his closer relation to it.

II. The force of the example, &c.—This illustrates the claims of Christ, and condemns the apathy and indifference of men.

1. By the superiority of the object.
2. By the distance from which she came.
3. By the grounds of her visit—mere report.
4. By the sacrifices and difficulties involved.
5. By the want of warrant and invitation.
6. By the fact that she was a Gentile daughter of Ham.
7. By the spirituality of her aim—no doubt to inquire after God. Two or three particulars in the history worthy of notice, (1 Kings x. 1–10,) *e.g.* (*a*) The effect on her mind (verse 5). (*b*) The confession she made (verse 7). (*c*) The eulogy pronounced on his servants (verse 8). (*d*) The costly presents she offered (verse 10).

ANONYMOUS.

SLOTHFULNESS CONDEMNED.

MATTHEW xx. 6.—“Why stand ye here all the day idle?”

I. A work supposed.

II. A state condemned.

III. A question urged.

I. A work supposed.

1. It is a work that terminates upon an object of supreme importance.

2. It is proposed to us by the highest authority.
3. It requires long, steady, and earnest application.
4. It is certain of ultimate success.

II. A state condemned—idleness.

1. By the limited space allowed for its fulfilment—a day.
2. By the analogy of worldly employments.
3. By the certainty of a future reckoning.

III. A question urged: Why?" &c.

1. Aversion to the work.
2. Indifference.
3. Indecision.
4. Procrastination.

ANONYMOUS.

THE LORD'S MARVELLOUS DOINGS.

MATTHEW xxi. 42.—“This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

Our first inquiry on reading these words, is, To what do they refer? What is it that is so marvellous that God must have done it? *This*. It refers generally to the work of Redemption, and particularly to the appointment of Christ to be the foundation of hope to all builders for salvation.

I. That redemption is God's work.

II. That this work is of a transcendently marvellous kind.

I. That redemption, &c.

1. Because it was contrary to the intention of the builders in all their actions. They rejected this Saviour; loaded him with scorn; laboured to destroy him, &c. No being did anything to forward it—hell and earth both against it, and carried their hostility to the utmost—angels contributed nothing, they were mere spectators.
2. Because all the circumstances of this work were divinely foreordained. This is one of the most glorious and

mysterious parts of Divine government, itself pure and just, yet making use of men's sins for holy ends. All was predetermined—their rejection, pride, and unbelief—his shame, agony, and crucifixion.

3. Because no one else was competent to perform it.—This work of redemption is that of laying down terms of man's reconciliation and pardon, and prescribing the means. Now it is for God, and God alone, to say in what terms he will pardon and accept the guilty. "Behold, *I* lay." No other trust can have adequate foundation.

II. That this work is marvellous, &c.

1. From the extent of agency involved.—It engages all three sacred persons in the Trinity—it employs agency of angels—it makes use of man—presses into its service even the wickedness of men—malice of devils—all providence is subservient to it.
2. From the Divine attributes exerted and displayed.—Power, overcoming the greatest difficulties—wisdom reconciling the greatest contradiction—Holiness securing justice and truth—love and goodness on the grandest scale.
3. From the demerit of its objects.
4. From the number and extent of its benefits, and the final glory it secures. (a) Removal of wrath and condemnation. (b) Reconciliation and peace of conscience. (c) Access to God, and friendship with him. (d) Adoption. (e) Sanctified nature. (f) Eternal life.

Conclusion.

1. This work challenges trust and confidence of all.
2. It requires meditation and admiration.
3. It demands unceasing praise.

ANONYMOUS.

MAKING LIGHT OF SALVATION.

MATTHEW xxii. 5.—"But they made light of it."

- I. Men are apt to remember and affectionately think of

things they highly esteem; but as for those which they disregard, they can easily forget them, and live daily without a single thought of them.

- II. The things that men value will be the theme of frequent conversation.
- III. Things only talked about, and not reduced to practice, are made light of.
- IV. We take pains and labour to secure the things we value
- V. Things that men highly esteem, deeply and tenderly affect them.
- VI. Our estimate of things may be discovered by the diligence and earnestness of our endeavours after them.
- VII. That which we highly value, we think it impossible to buy too dearly.
- VIII. Those things we highly value, we shall help our friends to obtain.

Improvement.

- 1. Those who make light of the Saviour, make light of him who did not make light of them.
- 2. They make light of matters of the greatest excellency and importance.
- 3. Consider whose salvation it is you make light of—your own.
- 4. This sin is aggravated by professing to believe that gospel you make light of.
- 5. Consider what things those are which you prefer to the neglect of these.
- 6. Making light of Christ and salvation, is a certain evidence of no interest in them.

time is hastening when none will make light of

THE FAITHFUL MINISTER.

MATTHEW xxiv. 45, 46.—“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.”

I. The work which Jesus Christ has committed to the pastors of his flock

1. They are to feed the flock of Christ.
2. To exercise discipline and maintain order.

II. The qualities required in them.

1. Fidelity.
2. Prudence.

III. The great reward which awaits them here and hereafter.

1. Adequate to the nature of their work.
2. In harmony with its grandeur, beauty, excellence.
3. In keeping with the intimate relation they sustain to the Lord Jesus Christ.

ANTOINE CLARION.

FINAL REJECTION OF THE WICKED.

MATTHEW xxv. 10.—“And the door was shut.”

The foolish virgins, being alarmed at the unexpected coming of the bridegroom, and conscious of their unpreparedness for that important event, try various methods to avoid the dreaded consequences. They arose and trimmed their lamps, which implies their bestirring themselves, and exerting those powers of which they were possessed. Their lamps were extinguished, and their foolish presumption turned to hopeless despair. They set themselves with great earnestness to seek the qualifications which they wanted, but alas!

it was in vain; it was now too late. Salvation had been neglected; now it was denied. All the guests invited, expected, and prepared, have entered in, and these are excluded—"The door was shut."

I. Explain the representation made:—The door of heaven is especially to be understood. Sin had closed this, but Christ opened it. It will one day be shut again, and with it the door of opportunity, the door of pity and mercy, the door of hope.

II. Considerations which evince the awfulness of this truth.

1. It is God that shuts the door. 2. There is no other way of entrance. 3. It was in some respects once open. 4. Others are shut in. 5. Once shut, the door is for ever shut. 6. Though one door is shut, yet there is another open.

III. Improvement.—What terror does this speak to wicked men. The happiness of the saints will be completed by that which is the misery of the damned. The distinction between saints and sinners will remain when all other distinctions cease.

B. BEDDOME.

FOLLOWING CHRIST AFAR OFF.

MATTHEW xxvi. 58.—"But Peter followed him afar off."

O strange aberration within a few short hours! Is this the courageous Peter that said, "I will go with thee to prison and to death?" He loved his Master, and therefore he followed him, but fear for his own safety prevailed above this love, and therefore he followed afar off. He should have gone into the court to speak for his Master. He wanted a friend then, and there was no one to lift up his voice for him. Then there was this

man, going and sitting with idle, ignorant people, not to reprove them for their wickedness, but because there was a fire there on a cold day. He went in to see the end. Curiosity, not conscience, prompted him. He followed him as a stranger, not as an intimate friend.

I. The symptoms of following Christ afar off.

II. The consequences of following Christ afar off.

III. The remedy for following Christ afar off.

I. The symptoms, &c.—One of the first symptoms is a gradual departure from him. There were many steps, gradations.

1. Self-confidence.

2. Ignorant zeal and the use of carnal weapons.

3. Abandonment of the cause he had espoused.

Another symptom is a disinclination to commune with him; another, an indifference to meet him at public ordinances; another, an attempt to stretch Christian liberty to the utmost.

II. The sad consequences, &c.

1. Such a course grows worse and worse.

2. It brings its own punishment.

3. It is unspeakably offensive to Jesus Christ.

III. Some of the remedies, &c.—To sum up all in one word—you must go back again to the stepping-stone of your Christian faith. Illustration—Prodigal son.

Consider whom you profess to follow—dwell in his love.

The obligations you are under to follow the Lord closely.

What advantages you derive from following him closely.

Who has promised to help you to follow him.

If the consequences of following Christ afar off be so dreadful, what must be the consequences of not following him at all!

J. SHERMAN.

THE GOSPEL DEMANDS AND DESERVES ATTENTION.

MARK iv. 23.—“If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”

The sages of antiquity delivered much of their knowledge in comprehensive sentences. Each of the wise men of Greece was distinguished by some aphorism. All nations have had their peculiar proverbs. The generality of mankind are much more influenced by detached and striking phrases, than by long addresses or laboured reasonings. “The words of the wise are as goads and as nails.” We often read of the sayings of Jesus, and there is no sentence which he so frequently repeated as the text. View it,

- I. As implying the authority of the speaker. He had all the authority which is derived from knowledge—all that is derived from unimpeachable rectitude—all that flowed from “miracles and wonders, and signs.” Consider his uncontrollable dominion—the dignity of his character—the intimate and affecting relations he sustains.
- II. The importance of the subject.—Jesus Christ is not afraid to awaken attention—he can more than repay it.
- III. This is an appeal to impartial consideration. There is no secrecy—nothing to be concealed. Truth glories in exposure—it is the gospel you have to consider, and nothing else—attention is absolutely necessary—guard against prejudice. Impatience disqualifies for religious investigation. Nothing is so unfavourable to successful inquiry as pride.
- IV. The Saviour demands a practical improvement of his Word.—All the concern many of our hearers have with sermons consists in hearing them. The

danger of delusion : "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." The precarious tenure of privileges—the happiness of those who receive the gospel—means not improved become injurious—the account will be required at the bar of God of all your hearing.

W. JAY.

REPENTANCE.

MARK vi. 12.—"And they went out, and preached that men should repent."

Jesus having chosen twelve of his followers to be his constant attendants, began to send them out to preach in the surrounding cities and villages, and we are told here the subject of their ministry. The doctrine of repentance holds a distinguished place in the Scripture system of Divine truth. The gospel is adapted to the circumstances of sinful, not innocent creatures. Moses and the prophets frequently inculcated its necessity. It was the substance of John the Baptist's ministry. It was a doctrine in the Lord's public teaching of frequent recurrence. It was a part of the commission he left with his disciples, and the subsequent history of the apostolic labours proves that they were faithful in the discharge of this important trust.

I. Explain the nature of true repentance.

II. Point out its indispensable necessity.

III. Consider the motives and encouragements which incite thereto.

I. The nature, &c.

1. Genuine sorrow for sin.

2. Unreserved and ingenuous confession.
3. A purpose to walk in newness of life.

II. Indispensable necessity, &c.

1. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
2. Express commands of God.
3. Awful threatenings denounced against finally impenitent.

III. Motives, &c.

1. The call of the gospel is encouraging.
2. Special promises to such.
3. Examples recorded in Scripture.
4. Unspeakable happiness which awaits true penitent in the eternal world.

Conclusion.

Caution against delay, and against despair.

DAVID BLACK.

NO ROOM IN THE INN.

LUKE II. 6, 7.—“And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

- I. Contrast the helplessness and indigence of the newborn infant with the movements of the Roman Empire, overruled by Divine Providence so as to certify that birth.
- II. Compare the scanty provisions for personal comfort with the adoration and offerings of Eastern Magi.
- III. The lowly scene in the stable, and the magnificent exhibition in the celestial regions.
- IV. The departing sceptre of David, and the appearance of the kingdom that cannot be moved.

V. The predictions of prophets and the obscurity of the parents.

Improvement.

1. What are men striving about? The best apartments of an inn.
2. Let us learn not only to submit, but to rejoice in the distinctions and varieties of condition which a wise Providence has established in the world.
3. Let us bless God that he has made the real happiness of man so independent of circumstances which can possibly fall to the lot of but a few.
4. Let us look to the Saviour in his cradle, and with a holy contempt of sublunary things; let us look to the Saviour in his glory, and rise to a participation of it.
5. Does the world treat us as it did our Master? Can we find no room in the inn? Let us make the greater dispatch and get home.

DR H. HUNTER.

THE RICH FOOL.

LUKE xii. 20.—“Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.”

Let us consider,—

- I. Why our Lord calls the person mentioned in the text, “fool.”
 1. He was rich in this world, but neglected being rich towards God, rich in grace.
 2. He was perplexed without reason: “What shall I do?” &c. Had he been wise, he would have inquired, “What shall I do to be saved?”
 3. He determined to pull down his barns, not to break off his sins.
 4. He resolved to build greater barns, but forgot to build on the Rock of Ages.

5. He flattered his soul it was rich, when it was miserably poor.
6. He promised himself long life.
7. He encouraged "ease," where there ought to have been care.
8. He provided food for the soul that it cannot take.

II. The sudden, unexpected separation: "This night shall thy soul," &c.

1. He must part with all his moveable goods, except a winding sheet.
2. All his landed estate, except a grave.
3. All his barns, houses, dwellings, except a coffin.
4. All his friends and relations, without exception.
5. All his time, precious time.
6. His soul.

III. The circumstances of his death: "This night."

This implies, (1.) Darkness and horror. (2.) Drowsiness and carnal security. (3.) Sadness. (4.) Sin.

IV. Remark upon the value and excellency of the soul. Its worth may be estimated,—

1. From the admirable texture of the body, which is only its casket.
2. From the extraordinary pains men take with the body.
3. From the testimony of Christ (Matthew xvi. 26).

V. Who should require his soul?

1. Not Christ as a Saviour. 2. Nor good angels. 3. Nor departed saints. 4. Some unforeseen distemper, or accident. 5. Death; evil spirits.

VI. Remark upon the last words of text, "Thy soul shall be required *of thee*."

Not *of me*, says the rich man. God says *of thee*. "May not some poor Lazarus be required first?" "No, *of thee*." "May not an old sinner go first?" "No, *of thee*." The messenger death is peremptory and inexorable

The epithet which the Saviour fixed on this rich man, belongs—

1. To all who depend on many years of life, and do not habitually prepare for death.
2. To all, whether rich or poor, who are not rich towards God.
3. Especially to those who, though they have not the conveniences, and hardly the necessities of life, will yet trample on the riches of Divine grace and heavenly glory.

FLETCHER OF MADELEY, 1750.

REASONS WHY MEN ARE NOT CHRISTIANS.

LUKE xiv. 18.—“I pray thee have me excused.”

It is worth every man's while to ascertain the exact reason why he is not a Christian. It would be well also to inquire, whether that on which he is relying is a substantial reason, and such as will abide the investigations of the last day. A good reason must be such an one as will meet with the approbation of God, and will admit to heaven without reliance on the merits of the Saviour.

I. The causes why men are not Christians.—From *what* do men seek to be excused? The *real* cause of excuse is not always avowed. The grand reason is opposition of the heart to religion. It assumes a great many forms.

1. A feeling that they do not *need* salvation in the way proposed in the gospel.
2. A supposition that there is not such danger as to make it a subject of serious alarm.
3. A secret scepticism about the truth of Christianity.
4. A feeling that the Divine government is unreasonable and severe.
5. Hostility to some member or members of the church.
6. Worldliness.

II. Are these reasons satisfactory?—To conscience?—To God? The duty of loving God with all the heart, is the first duty recommended by every precept of natural and revealed religion. Repentance is enjoined by all that is sacred in authority, and responded to by the conscience of every sinner. Faith is demanded on the fore-front of the Christian message. The necessity of the new birth is urged with frequency and power in the Scripture.

1. You dare not urge these alleged excuses as the real cause why you do not attend to religion, and embrace the offers of mercy.
2. They will not stand when a man is convicted of sin.
3. The same thing occurs on the death-bed.
4. These excuses will not be admitted at the bar of God.

Will you risk your soul's salvation on the reasons which operate to prevent you becoming a Christian?

ALBERT BARNES.

YET THERE IS ROOM.

LUKE xiv. 22.—“And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.”

- I. The interest which the faithful minister has in his work: “And the servant said,” &c.
- II. That the gospel day of grace is limited: “*Yet* there is room.”
- III. The glorious and encouraging fact: “There is room.”
 1. In the church on earth.
 2. In the affections of Jesus.
 3. In heaven.

EDITOR.

THE FOLLY OF PROFESSION WITHOUT FORE-THOUGHT.

LUKE xiv. 28.—“Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?”

Consideration is necessary in natural things. What is done in a hurry is often repented of. So that a wise and prudent man, when he undertakes anything of importance, will think of the advice of the town-clerk of Ephesus. When any matter of considerable consequence was brought before the rulers and elders of the congregation of Israel, it is said, “they sat down to examine the matter;” but this is especially necessary in those things which concern the well-being of the soul, and our happiness in a future state.

I. The entrance upon, and progress in, a religious life is like building a tower.

II. This calls for great caution and circumspection.

III. Where these are neglected, it is an instance of folly, and will expose to shame and contempt.

I. The entrance upon, &c.—The parable intimates that there is something to be done by *us*. It cannot be the procuring of salvation, for that has been done by Christ already, and his work is perfect. Nor can it mean the application of salvation, for this is the work of the Spirit? Yet there is what the apostle calls a “working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” There are many graces to be exercised, many temptations to be resisted, many enemies to be vanquished, and many duties to be performed.—This profession of religion may be compared to building a tower.

1. Because there must be a foundation to support the building.

2. It is a work of labour and difficulty.
3. It is a gradual work.
4. It is a visible work.
5. It is a durable work.

II. This calls for, &c.

1. He will consider the certain and necessary expense.
2. To this he will add the possible and contingent expense.
3. What it must cost God.
4. The benefits and advantages hoped for.

III. Where this caution and circumspection are neglected, &c.

Those who do not set out well are not likely to hold on.

"Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength."

Conclusion.

The more religion is examined, the more excellent it appears.

Let us turn our eyes to the expense Christ was at in the work of redemption.

Let those who have begun to build in God's name, in Christ's strength go on.

B. BEDDOME.

THE JOY OF ANGELS OVER A REPENTING SINNER.

LUKE XV. 7.—"I say unto you, That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

I. Where are we to find these ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance?

1. It may be that those who have already repented are intended.
2. Or that the case is put hypothetically for the sake of argument.

II. Why this spectacle should have such an effect on heavenly beings, and particularly on angels?

They take a deep concern in the success of Christ's church. Probably they are witnesses in Christian assemblies. They rejoice in the accession of a new member to the great society of which they are a part—they see the connection between repentance and happiness—their benevolence is proportioned to their elevation.

III. Why the joy of angels should be greater on the occasion of one sinner's repentance, than that which they derive from the spectacle of ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance?

They are affected by the extraordinary and astonishing change that has taken place. The first conversion of a sinner is an era in eternity—it is registered in heaven. Repentance is of all things most essential to a sinner.

IV. Why does Christ place the scene of this joy in heaven?

The repentance of a sinner is a subject of joy on earth—to the faithful minister—to the Christian church, but the joy of angels is far more just and adequate—they taste the joy which is set before the convert—they know the value of the soul.

Improvement.

1. The dignity and importance of the Christian ministry.
2. The motive that the text presents to repentance

ROBERT HALL.

THE TRUE VALUATION OF MAN.

LUKE xvi. 25.—“Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”

I. If we would take a right estimate of man, we

must consider him in respect to a double state: here and hereafter.

II. That the state of man in the world to come holds a proportion to his spirit and temper; to the tenor of his life and actions here.

I. If we would take a right estimate, &c.—Man is more valuable than his condition in this world represents him to be.

1. The state of man in this world represents him as subject to the same vanity that all other creatures lie under, (Job xvii. 14; Ecclesiastes iii. 19). But all this is only as to outward appearance; really, he is made for immortality.
2. Here he is subject to low and mean employments (Genesis iii. 19; 2 Thess. iii. 10). He is actually made for attendance upon God.
3. The present state represents man in a condition of beggary, dependence, and necessity (Job i. 21; 1 Tim. vi. 7). He is the glory of God's creation.
4. The state of man here represents him as worn out with solicitude and care (Ecclesiastes iv. 8). In reality he is God's peculiar charge.
5. Man here appears to be in danger from his own kind; whereas God made the second in order to the first.
6. In this state man appears the object of the Devil's envy and tyranny (Ephes. ii. 2). This enemy is extraordinary—out of the order of God's creation.

II. It is fairly knowable in this world, what our state and condition will be in the world to come.

1. Not from worldly circumstances.
2. From the state of the heart—the manner of life.

DR BENJ. WHICHCOT, 1690.

GOD'S DELAYS NOT DENIALS.

LUKE xviii. 7.—“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?”
 (The French version reads, “*Though he delay his vengeance out of love to them.*”)

Perhaps there was never a speech full of greater impiety, or more offence to the Divine Majesty, than that of the Jews whom Malachi introduces, saying, “It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance.” The fact is, it is almost natural to man to imagine that religion is useless and unprofitable to her disciples; because the righteous are subject to sorrow, often reduced to a sad and deplorable condition, as it seems to the natural eye; many entertain a disparaging opinion of Divine grace, and see nothing therein that can conciliate their affections and their hearts. To rectify such false judgments as these, to awaken in our hearts the sweet and salutary confidence that prayer is not vain, the Saviour addresses to us the narrative which contains our text.

I. The description of God's elect: “They cry day and night unto him.”

II. The practice of God in relation to their prayers: “Though he bear long,” &c.

III. The care he displays in ultimate deliverance after delay: “And shall not,” &c.

I. The description of God's elect.

1. They cry.—This indicates, (1.) The greatness of their wants. (2.) The earnestness of their desires. (3.) The firmness of their faith.

2. They cry to God.—Their prayers are not vague and confused, but specific, special. They are sure that sooner or later he will hear.

3. They cry day and night—in all seasons.

II. The delays of God to answer his people's prayers.—

These are designed:—

1. To contribute to their salvation.
2. To render their oppressors inexcusable.
3. To magnify his own glory. God's time is when all other helps fail.

III. The care he displays in the ultimate deliverance of his people.—He will certainly overtake and punish the adversaries of his church, and rescue his afflicted children. His presence is always at hand. His incorruptible justice should console us under all the injustice of men. After years of conflict, suffering, and grief, he will give peace and rest. If he delay for a season, he will sustain, by the grace of his Spirit, until that happy hour already fixed in his councils, when, after having sighed and cried a long time, we shall succeed to our cries, eternal praises to celebrate his power who shall have so gloriously saved us.

JEAN GUILLEBERT, 1687.

THE TITLE ON THE CROSS.

LUKE xxiii. 38.—“And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

The dignity of Christ was openly proclaimed and defended by an enemy, and that in the time of his greatest reproaches and sufferings.

- I. Consider the nature and quality of this title.
 - II. What hand the providence of God had in this matter?
 - III. Its proper uses and improvement.
- I. The nature, &c.

1. It was extraordinary.
2. It was public.
3. It was honourable.
4. It was vindicating.
5. It was predicting and presaging.
6. It was immutable.

II. What hand Divine providence, &c.

1. In overruling the heart and hand of Pilate contrary to his inclinations.
2. In applying a present, public remedy to the reproaches of Christ.
3. In casting the ignominy of the Saviour's death upon the very men who ought to bear it.
4. In fixing this title to the cross when there was so great a confluence of people to take notice of it.

III. Uses and improvement.

1. The Providence of God often overrules the counsels and actions of the worst of men to his own glory.
2. The greatest services performed to Christ undesignedly, will never be accepted or rewarded of God.
3. How shameful if Christians retract from what they have said or done on Christ's behalf.

J. FLAVEL, 1670.

GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS INCARNATION.

JOHN i. 14.—“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.”

- I. The surprising mystery of the incarnation:—1. What is the Word? 2. What is implied in his being made flesh? There was a real union of the two natures in him. The essential properties of each remain distinct. There is a *personal* union of the two natures. This incarnation was designed for the

purpose of securing the honour of God's truth and holiness, while he displayed his free and sovereign grace to fallen man. To prepare and qualify Jesus for a Mediator and Redeemer.

Inferences:—1. How should this mystery be studied by us, and fill our hearts with admiration and lively gratitude.

2. How poor the foundation of their hopes who believe not Christ to be both God and man.

3. How great our engagement to confidence in Christ.

4. How great should be our concern that Christ may have a union with our particular persons, as well as with our common nature.

II. The evidence of his incarnation:—He dwelt among the Jews. His disciples, they beheld his glory, &c. The transfiguration. His personal qualities. His miracles. His baptism—Resurrection—Ascension.

III. The happy fruit of his incarnation:—We have a Saviour full of grace and truth. His fulness is such, nothing can be added to it. By his grace we obtain pardon of sin and justification. By this, renewed, and sanctified, and led to happiness. He is full of habitual, inherent truth and faithfulness. As the substance of all the figures of the law. As he has made a full discovery of the mind and will of God.

IV. Inferences:—

1. How great a happiness it is to see displayed among us, the grace and truth that Christ brought into the world.

2. How great our obligations to the Redeemer.

3. Let us be careful not to neglect the open treasures of his grace and truth.

EDWARD GODWIN, 1728.

GOD MANIFESTED IN CHRIST.

JOHN i. 18.—“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

There is something very remarkable in the frequency of this repetition, “No man hath seen God.” John reiterates it in his first epistle, borrowed from the statement of Christ, which seems to have made an impression upon the mind of this spiritual Evangelist. Jesus says, “Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he,” &c., evidently meaning himself; and again, “Ye have neither heard his voice,” &c. Now, before explaining this, we may say at once that the text contains two parts.

I. God in his own nature invisible.

II. God declared or manifested by Christ.

I. God in his own nature invisible.—This important declaration is evidently levelled at the appearances to the prophets under the Old Testament. Frequently after such manifestations they said, “I shall die”—Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Manoah, &c.—Error of the Jews respecting these manifestations. The fact is, in none of them was there a sight of God. That God is invisible arises,

1. From the spirituality of his nature.
2. From the weakness of the proper faculty in us.
3. From the fact that heaven is his dwelling-place.

He has never been altogether without witness: Creation, Providence, successive revelations. Yet, when we have come to the end of them all, we exclaim, “Lo! these are parts of his ways.” This portion of the subject teaches us reverence for God.

II. God declared, &c.—Our text sets forth the Saviour's qualifications for this office.

1. He is the only-begotten Son of the Father.

2. He is in the Father's bosom.

No other person ever had these qualifications; hence their failures.

1. God is declared and manifested in the person of Christ.
2. God is declared and manifested by the teachings of Christ respecting him.
3. God is declared and manifested in the work of Christ.

ANONYMOUS.

LIVING WATER.

JOHN iv. 10.—“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”

In condescension to our weakness, our blessed Master has not only taught us by positive precepts and declarations, but he has suffered us to hear his conversations, and to be acquainted with his remarks; so that his conduct in life brings a kind of collateral evidence to the truths which he uttered. [Repeat the circumstances which led to this delightful dialogue.] Herein are set before us,

- I. God's greatest gift.
 - II. Christ's best promise.
 - III. The world's worst error.
 - IV. The sinner's strongest encouragement.
- I. God's greatest gift: “If thou knewest *the* gift.”—There is an infinite variety in the gifts of God; in creation, for instance. It is well for us to remark and admire these; but while we are discoursing on them, we must remember that they are not *the* gift. For if a man limit his time and his thoughts to the consideration of the beauties of creation, and attend

not to the chief gift of God, it is like presenting to a wretched criminal, on his way to execution, something to amuse him; and, at the same time, withholding the only knowledge which could save him. I would ask every one before me, Have you seen and felt this great act of God's grace and mercy in sending his Son Christ Jesus to save perishing sinners?

II. Christ's best promise: "living water" — the promise of the Holy Spirit. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive," (John vii. 37, 39). A humble and patient believer, resting on Christ's promise, rises where all haughty reasoners and speculators must sink. He finds that this "living water" does satisfy him; that the Spirit does convince him; that it does seal, and comfort, and sanctify him; that it gives him an earnest of the eternal inheritance; bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God; that it bears witness to the truth of the gospel; that he has something to comfort his heart; that here is satisfaction, and nowhere else. He says, "I find that what Christ has promised, I have received—I do not thirst as I formerly did—I do not faint as I used to do—I do not now run about crying, Who will show me any good?"

III. The world's worst error: "If *thou knewest* the gift of God."—A thinking man must observe with pain, that while the world boasts of its success and its advances in illumination, yet talk to men of the light of the world—speak of the bread of life, or of this living water—you bring strange things to their ears. If a man had to pass through a desert, and there were but one spring of water in that desert; and if he and his whole family must perish should

he pass that spring, would he travel on without consideration—would he say, that he hoped all would be very well—he dare say he should do as well as others? &c. “If our gospel be hid,” says St Paul, “it is hid to them that are lost.” The world’s *worst* error is neglect of Christ.

IV. The sinner’s strongest encouragement: “If thou hadst known,” &c., “thou wouldest have asked,” and “he would have given.”—This is our strongest encouragement—the one point of comfort—there is living water in a dying world. If a man will not ask he rejects the counsel of God; he tramples on his gifts; and, in so doing, he incurs aggravated guilt, and must suffer aggravated condemnation. Remember, there never was but one spring of living water: “Ho! every one that thirsteth,” &c.

RICHARD CECIL, M.A.

THE GOSPEL AT SYCHAR.

JOHN iv. 29.—“Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”

There are some narratives in the Word of God which it is not only unnecessary but even injurious to explain. They are so perfect in their exquisite simplicity, so sublime in the grandeur of their representation, that to add a word is needless and presumptuous. Such is the history which supplies our text. So long as language shall have power to captivate the mind—so long as music shall delight the ear—so long as colour and sound shall affect the senses, this chapter will inspire sentiments of joy and gladness wherever man is found.

Everything in John’s narrative is made subservient to the grand design of narrating the exact words of the

Saviour. He seems to have lain in Jesus' bosom that he might be nearer Jesus' lips. And O! what gracious words are there contained in this wondrous dialogue. They have proved more refreshing than the waters of the far-famed fountain beside which they were spoken.

I. Surprising discoveries.

II. Experimental evidence.

III. Momentous inquiry.

IV. Practical outworking.

I. Surprising discoveries: "Come, see a man," &c.—When Samuel was sent to anoint Saul, he disclosed his commission with the words, "I will tell thee all that is in thine heart." In like manner, but in an infinitely higher degree, Jesus disclosed secrets of conscience as an evidence of his Divine authority: "Before that Philip called thee," &c.—"Why do thoughts arise in your hearts?"—"He knew that they were desirous to ask him." In converse with this woman he revealed the secrets of her domestic history. The springs of memory were touched—the past revived all luminous with conviction—every act assumed its right dimensions. The same process takes place under faithful ministry of Word of God. The book of God's remembrance is opened to the sinner, and he is taught the corruption of his heart. These wounds of the spirit awaken thirst for that water which springs up unto everlasting life.

II. Experimental evidence: "Which told *me*."—A man may be thoroughly well versed in all the arguments which sustain the credibility of Scripture. He may admit its inspiration—receive its miracles—believe its prophecies, and yet, if his knowledge stay here, it is miserably insufficient and dangerously delusive. The gospel is for trial. It must be *tasted, handled, felt*. It is not the testimony of another, but the *felt*

power of the gospel which makes it valid in the heart: "Now, we believe not for thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Our appeal to the sceptic is, Lay aside your prejudice—forget your doubts—"Come and see." We address the nominal Christian thus, The truth we proclaim is not merely for your admiration or assent, it is to be the solace of your lives, your support in affliction, your refuge in death, the choicest treasure you possess. Believers in Christ, this experimental evidence is your inestimable privilege. Like the honey in Jonathan's mouth which enlightened his eyes, To have it quickened and increased, is the end of all ordinances.

III. Momentous inquiry: "Is not this the Christ?"—

A gratifying proof that at the time of the Saviour's advent, the Jews were not alone in their expectation of the Desire of all nations. Even the Samaritans, whose object it was to be as unlike the Hebrew as possible, held this firm belief. Her inquiry argues no doubt in her own mind. A desire to awaken their anxiety. Language of confession—of admiration. How many inquiries have been raised respecting the person of the Saviour. One question with its answer, for ever settled the controversy, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" All the casuistry of his foes, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" "Is not this the carpenter's son?" were but affected interest, designed to cover guile and enmity. Looking round upon triumphs wrought by gospel—transformed lives of men—consolations diffused in sorrow—patient continuance in well-doing—diffusion of truth to remote lands—"Is not this the Christ." Once more this inquiry shall be heard, when "Lo! here" and "Lo! there" have been silenced

—when the divided heavens disclose the descending Lord—from countless voices shall be heard the rapturous shout, “Lo! this is our God; we have waited for him; he will save us,” &c. A sleeping world, waking in amazement, shall exclaim, “Is not this the Christ?”

. Practical outworking: “Come see a man.”—Here are two grand requirements of Christian life: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith”—“Holding forth the word of life.” The felt power must precede, the express testimony must follow. Consistency—prayer—humility—all graces—all Christian efforts say, “Come and see.” This woman came for water for her household, and took back living water for the community. So Lydia exchanged her purple for a robe of righteousness—so, many have brought indifference or curiosity to the house of God, and carried away conviction.

EDITOR.

THE NOBLEMAN OF CAPERNAUM.

JOHN iv. 46-50.—“So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.”

This short but instructive history suggests four observations:—

- I. The indigence of human greatness.
- II. The exercise of faith.

III. The all-sufficiency of Jesus.

IV. The progress of the Saviour's teaching.

I. The indigence, &c.—A subject little thought of in the world. A nobleman in distress comes to one so poor that he "had not where to lay his head." Riches no relief to sickness—they cannot purchase peace, or give ease to a guilty conscience, or comfort the dying man. Many of our wants have no relief but from Him who is infinitely rich.

II. The exercise of faith.—This man felt his poverty—acknowledged it—came to Jesus; here was faith, true faith. Not so strong as that of Centurion. It is a blessed sign when a great man can bear reproof, and is willing to be instructed. He receives the rebuke, but is still set on his object: "Sir, come down."

III. The all-sufficiency, &c.—The divinity of Christ is the foundation of his priestly office—of his regal office also. He removed not only sickness from the child, but doubt from the father. There is no life, no hope, no rest for us in the world, but in "God manifest in the flesh."

IV. The progress of Christ's teaching: "Himself believed, and his whole house." Truth gains by fair examination. Afflictions a stepping-stone to wisdom.

We have sick children—spiritually sick—let us take them to Jesus.

R. CECIL.

PREFERENCE OF THE SOUL TO THE BODY.

JOHN vi. 27.—"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

I. All care and pains for the interest of our bodies is not forbidden.

Our bodies claim a portion of our care. The law of nature and the word of God oblige us to honest industry in our lawful callings and stations, for the support of ourselves and our families. Those who neglect secular business tempt God and injure their neighbour. To have a lawful employment, and to be diligent in it, will preserve from many hurtful temptations. Nor is it unworthy of a Christian to make his temporal interests, and even the advancement of his worldly circumstances above what they are at his setting out in the world, a subordinate end of his labour and diligence.

II. The interest of our souls, and all which promotes that, deserves to be far preferred before any interests of the body.

1. All that is for the sustenance and welfare of the body has the character of "the meat which perisheth." Every present enjoyment may be lost. The use and comfort of worldly enjoyments may be lost, while the things themselves continue. The body itself, to which alone such comforts are suited, is perishing.
2. That which serves the interest of our souls, is of the most durable use,—“That meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” We have immortal souls as well as perishing bodies—our state hereafter will be determined by our behaviour here. We are often determined in the affairs of this life by the hope and fear of things to come, where we have far less certainty. It is a plain rule of wisdom, to decline a present pleasure to one equal to it of longer continuance; or to submit to a present inconvenience to prevent one more lasting, or to obtain a more lasting good. Whatever is temporal is incapable of giving full satisfaction. The eternity of happiness is its most satisfying character, and the eternity of misery its most bitter ingredient.

III. Labour and diligence are absolutely indispensable in order to secure our best interests.

1. Wherein labour for our souls is to be exercised.—In the diligent use of all appointed means; in opposing enemies and difficulties; in making continual advances

2. The necessity of labour and diligence for the soul is evident:—From the necessity of labour in securing our present interests; from the plain declarations of God.

IV. Personal application.

1. Examine which has had the preference—care of the soul or the body?
2. Expostulate with those who have neglected the soul.
3. Be persuaded to make everlasting life the governing aim of the present life.

DR JOHN EVANS, 1723.

THE SAVIOUR'S INVITATION TO THIRSTY SOULS.

JOHN vii. 37.—“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”

All the words of our blessed Redeemer deserve our very serious regard; but there is something in these words which may justly challenge a peculiar attention. They were spoken not in ordinary converse, or to a little circle of domestic friends, but delivered in the temple with a loud voice, on a solemn day, and in the midst of a very numerous assembly. [Relate the circumstances of the occasion].

I. Show that the springs of the most valuable blessings are in Christ.

II. That he diffuses these streams with a divine freedom, and in the richest abundance.

III. Add some practical reflections.

- I. That the springs of the best blessings are in Christ.
 1. Do you thirst for the pardon of sin? From the Lord Jesus Christ you may receive a supply.

2. Do you thirst for the favour of God? Our Lord Jesus Christ is able to introduce you to it.
3. Do you thirst for the communications of the Spirit? He can abundantly relieve you.
4. Do you thirst for the joys and glories of the heavenly world? He bestows them.

II. Prove that Jesus is willing to communicate, &c.

1. Let his invitations witness it.
2. The Spirit of Christ witnesses it.
3. The tears of Christ evidence it.
4. The blood of Christ proclaims his readiness to impart gospel blessings.
5. The experience of every pious soul both in heaven and earth.

III. Application.

1. To those who do not yet thirst after blessings of gospel.
2. To those who are now thirsting after them.
3. To those who have already tasted these refreshments.

DR DODDRIDGE.

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

JOHN x. 30.—“I and my Father are one.”

- I. Establish the sense of these words.—The occasion of the text was the conversation which Jesus had with the Jews on the divinity of his mission. “They came round about him” with the design of entrapping him. In case he should refuse to declare himself, they hoped to make the multitude suspicious of him. If he should declare himself, they would found an accusation against him at the tribunal of the Sanhedrim. Without declaring himself in a decided manner, he calls to their recollection the miracles he had performed, that they may judge for themselves

what HE must be, whose power can control at pleasure the course of nature's laws, &c. &c.

1. That Jesus is one with the Father in an infinite essence, is evident from the connection of the text with that which precedes it.
2. The fury of the Jews at this declaration of the Saviour fixes its sense.
3. The reasons which they allege: "Thou being a man makest thyself God."
4. The answer of the Redeemer.

II. Evidences of the truth contained in the text.

1. The combination of honours which revelation demands for Jesus Christ.
2. The perfections and works attributed to him.
3. The idea which it gives us of the manner of the Saviour's existence.

Application.

Let this truth inspire you with veneration, lively gratitude, obedience to Jesus.

THEODORE HUET, 1725.

THE MASTER CALLING.

JOHN xi. 28.—"The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

I. The title given to Christ: "The Master."

1. Expressive of authority.
2. Points out prophetic office.

II. His appearance: "Is come."

1. In his incarnation.
2. In the means of grace.
3. In special providences.
4. At the death-beds of his people.
5. He will come "a second time without sin unto salvation."

III. The appeal: "And calleth for thee."

1. In the word preached.
2. In the example of others.
3. By the power of his Spirit.

It is a personal call—an important call—a gracious call—(Proverbs i. 24.)

EDITOR.

FUTURE REVELATIONS OF MYSTERIOUS PROVIDENCES.

JOHN xiii. 7.—“What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ has in all ages taken care to exercise the faith, the patience, and the submission of his people; and he has done it while carrying on the kindest designs towards them, and while he has been acting in the strictest prosecution of these designs. He was now engaged in a work of astonishing condescension and goodness. The disciples saw it with amazement, that he, the Son of God, the heir of all things, the promised Messiah, the King of God's church, should condescend to wash their feet. Peter could not bear the thought of permitting it: and that occasioned the words of the text, in which we have a general truth delivered by our Lord, which it is profitable for us frequently to reflect upon.

I. There may be some ways in the conduct of the Redeemer towards his people, which they may not at present be able fully to understand.

1. It is supposable from the nature of things. Consider who he is—What we are—The relation in which he stands to us as Lord and Sovereign.
2. It is also what we see in fact to be the case. Many things happen, which we should have imagined his tenderness would have prevented—His dearest children

afflicted—Generous Christians poor—Useful Christians taken away—Churches desolated.

II. The time will come when we shall have much clearer views of the reasons of his dispensations.

1. Sometimes the reasons of mysterious providences open upon us in this life.
2. We may expect to know more of them in the future world. Our eye will be strengthened—our prospect extended—our company improved—and perhaps our Lord will give plainer lessons by immediate discovery from himself.

III. It is highly fit that we should acquiesce in what Christ does, how unknown soever the reasons of it may be to us.

1. We know that his ends are graciously directed.
2. We know that his means are wisely chosen.

DR DODDRIDGE.

THE MARK OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

JOHN xiii. 35.—“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

I. Love is the sign and seal of true Christianity.

1. It is taught us in the incarnation of the Saviour.
2. Proclaimed in every act of his life.
3. In his cross and passion.
4. In all his doctrinal instructions. The whole gospel tends in this direction. Love is the bond of the invisible church, and will be that of the church triumphant.

II. The nature and character of evangelical love.

1. It must be universal.
2. Sincere.
3. Efficacious.

The interests of society—our own welfare—the glory of Christ, are all involved in the display of this grace.

F. J. DURAND, 1770.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN THE MISSION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

JOHN xvi. 14.—“He shall glorify me.”

Every principle of the gospel illustrates its supreme and immutable regard to *holiness*. The wondrous and eternal purpose which originated it; the doctrines it reveals; its promises and threatenings; its institutions and means of grace, are all designed to purify and elevate the moral character of men. It would fit them for that holy world where they shall be purified from all that is debasing, and the glorious Redeemer shall present his church unreprouvable, without blemish and without spot. Hence the Scriptures speak of the dispensation of the Spirit; of the ministration of the Spirit, and of the Spirit of Christ as dwelling with men; and of the work of the Spirit as glorifying Christ.

I. Contemplate the *work itself* which the Spirit of God performs.—All the religion that ever was in the world, that is now, and ever will be, is the effect of his power.

1. He awakens the attention of the thoughtless and slumbering world to the truth of God.
2. He convinces of sin.
3. He regenerates the soul.
4. He is the comforter.

II. This great and divine agent is the messenger of Jesus Christ.

III. The mission and work of the Spirit of truth and grace, illustrate the glory of Christ.

1. The work of the Spirit furnishes additional proof of the great facts which form the sum and substance of Christianity.
2. It gives efficacy to the work already accomplished by Christ's death and resurrection.

3. It alone enables us to form some just estimate of the blessings which Christ bestows.
4. The Holy Spirit is the hope of the world.

DR GARDINER SPRING.

GOD'S LOVE TO THE SAINTS.

JOHN xvi. 27.—“For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me.”

The persons addressed were those who had followed Christ in all his tribulations, cleaved to him when others forsook him, and parted with all for his sake; and yet, how great was their blessedness!

I. An amiable character: “Lovers of Christ.”

II. A distinguished privilege: “The Father himself,” &c.

I. An amiable character.

1. It is the love of a debtor to his surety.
2. It is the love of one friend to another.
3. It is a brotherly love.
4. It is a conjugal love.
5. It is the love of a scholar to his instructor—of a servant to his master—of a loyal subject to his king.

II. A distinguishing privilege.—He loves them with the same love with which he loved Christ. He loved Christ in the midst of all his afflictions and tribulations. His love to Christ was practical, unchangeable, and everlasting: and so is his love to the saints. All their mercies are sweetened, and all their afflictions softened, by special love.

1. God's love to us is prior to our love to Christ.
2. Our love to Christ is not the cause, but effect, of God's love to us.

3. God's love to us is infinitely superior to our love to Christ.
4. Though God's love is the same to all the saints, yet the manifestations of it are not so.

Conclusion.

1. Serious self-examination: "Lovest thou me?"
2. Subject for wonder, astonishment, gratitude, and praise.

There are wonders in heaven, and wonders upon earth, wonders in nature, providence, and grace; but nothing is more wonderful than God's love to such unlovely, provoking creatures as we are, who never sought it, so little deserve it, and so ill requite it.

B. BEDDOME.

THE SAVIOUR GLORIFIED IN HIS PEOPLE.

JOHN xvii. 10.—"I am glorified in them."

- I. Jesus is glorified in his people by the derivation of all their excellences from him.
- II. He is glorified in their holy walk.
- III. He is glorified by the cheerfulness of their lives.
- IV. By their readiness to suffer for his sake.
- V. In their profession of his name.
- VI. By their exertions to promote his cause.

Conclusions:—

1. Christians ought not to think meanly of themselves. This condemns not humility, but thoughtlessness and levity.
2. If Christ is glorified in us, let us be his servants, attending continually upon this very thing—glorifying him.
3. If Christ is glorified in his people here, how will he be glorified in them hereafter!

4. Let the wicked remember that Christ will be glorified in them.

W. JAY.

THE MUTUAL GLORY OF CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE.

JOHN xvii. 22.—“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.”

Animating and encouraging words to all the faithful followers of the Redeemer. *Glory* is the most comprehensive word in the English language—the things implied in it exceeding the bounds of imagination and all powers of expression. *It is given*, not as the fruit of merit or purchase, but the result of incomprehensible love and distinguishing grace: “It is the gift of Christ.” He dearly bought it, and freely bestows it. *It is first given unto Christ*, that he might preserve it. We here perceive the greatness of his love, his Divine benevolence, his rich bounty, and his infinite fulness. *It is already done*. Our Lord does not say, “I will give,” but “I have given.” “O my God and Father! I have made myself responsible to them and to thee. My fidelity is their security.

I. The nature of Christ's glory.

II. Some particular instances in which this glory is communicated to the saints.

III. The inferences derived from the subject.

I. The nature, &c.—How little that can be explained which is so little understood!

1. There is the essential glory of Christ.
2. The mediatorial glory of Christ.
3. The remunerative glory of Christ.

II. Some instances, &c.

1. They have glorious titles given to them.
2. Glorious privileges are imparted to them.
3. They are brought into the most glorious relations.
4. Glorious acts and exploits are ascribed to them.
5. Glorious prospects are before them.

III. Inferences.

1. The vanity of those things upon which the hearts of worldly men are set.
2. The dignity of the real Christian.
3. Let us press forward to its full possession.
4. Let Him who puts this glory upon us, receive all glory from us.

B. BEDDOME.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

JOHN xviii. 36.—“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.”

I. Christ hath a kingdom.

1. He has a providential kingdom.
2. He has a mediatorial kingdom.

II. What kind of a kingdom is Christ's?

1. It differs from worldly kingdoms in pomp and glory.
2. In its subjects.
3. In its rule.
4. In laws.
5. In homage rendered.
6. In its weapons.
7. In its privileges.
8. In its penalties.

III. Privileges of its subjects.

1. All their business is transacted in the court of Christ.
2. They are all free men.
3. They have free trade with heaven.
4. They have right to all Saviour's ordinances.
5. They have his protection.
6. They will be victorious over all enemies.

7. They are all kings.
8. They have peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.
9. They are co-heirs with Christ.

IV. Why Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

1. Because he would confound the wisdom of the world.
2. Because he delights to exercise the graces of the saints.
3. That his power and wisdom may appear more glorious.

There is a happiness beyond the things of this world. It is called an evil world. The devil is its god. The pomp of it is not of the Father. Its glory is darkness. It knows not God. It lies in wickedness.

JEREMIAH BORROUGHS, 1645.

FAITH'S VIEW OF CHRIST.

JOHN xx. 20.—“And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.”

When the Lord of glory left his Father's bosom, and came into this world, we are sure it was for a purpose suited to his Divine nature. Christ came to make men glad, (Isaiah lxi. 1). When he came he said, “That their joy might be full.” In the verse before our text, his first word to his disciples was, “Peace be unto you.” The devil wants you to believe that we wish to take away your mirth and joy. He is a liar, and he was a liar from the beginning. Jesus came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; so do we. We come to break your *false* joy, to awaken you from your dream, before you be dashed into the burning lake. We come to give you fulness of joy that cannot wither—joy that cannot die—that will be brighter and brighter through an endless eternity.

I. What was it that made the disciples glad?

II. The application of the subject.

I. What was it, &c.

1. Not riches.
2. Not friends.
3. Not their own righteousness.
4. Not the sight of Christ with the bodily eyes.
5. Not merely his return to them.
- (1.) It was the sense they had of his finished work.
- (2.) They saw that Jesus was their living head.

II. Apply.

1. You may learn from this if you are disciples.
2. Seek a sight of Jesus.
3. How great will be their delight who are seeking Jesus, when they find him.
4. Those who have backslidden and lost this joy must look again to Jesus.
5. The folly of self-righteousness. Suppose they had looked to themselves, what would they have seen? One had denied—all had forsaken him—but they looked only to Jesus and were glad.

R. M. M'CHEYNE.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

ACTS i. 9.—“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

I. Consider what preceded the ascension of the Saviour.

II. His ascension itself.

I. What preceded the ascension? (See ver. 3–5).

1. Their minds were prepared for some extraordinary event.
2. They were directed as to their future conduct.
3. They were enriched with special benediction.

II. The ascension itself.—This was not a vision, but a literal and veritable removal. It was effected by the Saviour's own power; the attending cloud attested his Deity; the manner of ascension was unlike that of Elijah; the disciples were eye-witnesses of the fact. What majestic honours awaited him! Admitted to the same heavens, we shall be like him. He is ascended to intercede for us—to prepare a place for us.

ANTOINE CLARION.

THE NATURE AND QUALITY OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

ACTS ii. 23.—“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ was not only put to death, but to the worst of deaths, even the death of the cross.

I. The nature of his death.

II. The manner of the execution.

III. The reasons why Christ died thus.

IV. The improvement.

I. The nature of the death of Christ.

1. It was violent in itself, though voluntary on his part.
2. It was a most painful death.
3. It was a shameful death.
4. It was a cursed death (Gal. iii. 13.)
5. It was a slow and lingering death.
6. It was an unalleviated death.

II. The manner, &c.—They that were condemned to this death, bare the cross upon their own shoulders to the place of execution. They were stripped, and then fastened to the cross with nails. The cause of

punishment was fixed over the head of the sufferer, &c.

III. The reasons why Christ died thus.

1. He must bear the curse in his death.
2. To fulfil the types and prefigurations made of old (John iii. 14.)
3. To accomplish predictions (Ps. xxii. 16, 17 ; Zech. xii. 10 ; John iii. 14.)

IV. Improvement.

1. There is forgiveness and redemption for the greatest sinners. Because, (1.) There is efficacy in his blood to expiate the greatest sins. (2.) This efficacy is designed of God for believing sinners.
2. There is nothing of curse in the death of the saints.
3. How cheerfully should we bear any cross for Christ. (1.) It is but for a little way. (2.) Christ bears the heaviest end of it. (3.) Innumerable blessings proceed from a sanctified cross.
4. That which is sweet in the fruition to us, was costly in the acquisition.

JOHN FLAVEL, 1671.

CHRIST THE SUBJECT OF A GOSPEL MINISTRY.

ACTS ix. 20.—“And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.”

I. Inquire what it is to preach Christ?

II. Offer some considerations to recommend this preaching.

I. What it is, &c.

1. The subject of this preaching.—In a latitude of the expression, it takes in the whole compass of the Christian religion. Whatever is the immediate subject of discourse, it may be managed in such a way as to show the Saviour's

concern in it. It must lead our thoughts to the glory of his person and offices, or to his kingdom of providence or grace. Thus the apostles gave an evangelical turn to all moral duties. More restrictively, it takes in the adorable constitution of his person—His peculiar fitness for the redemption of the church—His royalties and advocacy—His offices, names, relations, &c.

2. In its acts this preaching implies, (1.) The declaration of these things concerning Christ. (2.) The defence and confirmation of the gospel. (3.) The proposing and recommending Christ to the acceptance of those who hear, whether sinners or believers.

II. Some considerations recommending this preaching.

1. Christ is a subject truly excellent, and every way worthy to be preached.
2. Preaching Christ is peculiarly suited to the gospel dispensation.
3. It is the special office of gospel ministers.
4. The most desirable success of the ministry depends upon it.
5. The honour of God and of religion are nearly concerned in it.
5. It is delightful and improving to our own souls and those of others.
7. There are but few that preach Christ, and few that regard him.

III. Application.

1. Hereby judge of the great excellency of a gospel ministry.
2. Let the grace that has made this appointment affect your hearts.
3. Be it your great concern to use and improve the preaching of Christ.

J. GUYSE, 1728.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

ACTS xvii. 31.—“He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.”

Great subjects introduce themselves. They require

no artistic exordium to engage the mind to attention. They captivate it without effort. Such is undoubtedly the doctrine of the last judgment. [Circumstances out of which text arose.]

I. The certainty of the last judgment.

II. Its character.

I. The certainty, &c.: "He hath appointed a day."—The expression is remarkable; it signifies that the decree is already fixed. The appointment is irrevocable; and to confirm this we have presumption—proof—demonstration.

1. Our presumption of a last judgment is founded on the belief of all nations, and the Divine judgments already experienced on earth.

2. Our proofs are drawn from our nature as dependent creatures, to whom God has given laws—having reasonable and accountable faculties—and from the present aspect of society compared with the attributes of God.

3. Our demonstrations are founded on the Word of God.

II. Its character.

1. It will be universal in regard to the persons.

2. It will be universal in relation to their actions.

3. It will be infallibly just and righteous.

III. Application.

1. How calculated to awaken the unconcerned!

2. Let the fact accompany us at all times.

3. Let us seek the friendship and favour of the Judge.

F. J. DURAND, 1770.

PAUL REASONING WITH FELIX.

ACTS xxiv. 25.—"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

I. The apostle's conduct before the Roman governor.

II. Some observations upon the narrative.

I. The apostle's, &c.

1. Consider the subjects on which he insisted.
2. The great prudence of the choice. (Illustrated by character of Felix.)
3. The polite manner in which he reproved this sinner.
4. The deference and respect he showed to his official character.
5. The wisdom of his conduct in relation to his own position, and the vindication of his principles.

II. Some observations, &c.

1. That preaching on moral subjects is a part of the gospel of Christ.
2. Such subjects should only be preached as enforced by principles and motives properly Christian.
3. If the preaching the faith of Christ should prove ineffectual, it is owing, not to any deficiency of efficacy in the doctrine, but to men's own fault.
4. When men cannot bear to hear moral virtues inculcated, it looks as if they were conscious of inward defects.
5. All doctrines of Christianity should be so reasoned upon as to carry evidence and conviction of their truth and importance.
6. The great sensibility of a guilty conscience.
7. The exceeding deceitfulness of sin in leading men to suppress friendly convictions.
8. The true reason why profligate men treat the institutions of religion with contempt and negligence.

DR CHANDLER.

THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN.

ACTS xxvi. 28.—“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

The chapter out of which this text is taken contains an admirable account which the great St Paul gave of his wonderful conversion from Judaism to Christianity,

when he was called to make his defence before Festus, a Gentile governor, and King Agrippa, &c.

I. What is meant by an almost Christian? In respect to his duty he is one that halts between two opinions; that wavers between Christ and the world. He has an inclination to religion, but is cautious how he goes too far in it. He is partial in obedience—depends on outward ordinances—relies on form of godliness—his moral virtues spring only from principle of self-love—he depends upon negative goodness.

II. Why so many are no more than almost Christians?

1. Because of the prevalence of false notions of religion.
2. From the servile fear of man.
3. Prevailing covetousness.
4. The love of pleasure.
5. Fickleness and instability of character.

III. The folly and danger of such a condition.

1. It is ineffectual to salvation.
2. It is prejudicial to others.
3. It is the greatest ingratitude to Jesus Christ.

G. WHITEFIELD.

THE WAGES OF SIN AND THE REWARD OF GRACE.

ROMANS vi. 23.—“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

God is an object so lovely, and so worthy of our homage and veneration, that if there were no other advantage to be derived from his service than the satisfaction of rendering to him a portion of that which is his due, we ought to do it with the most fervent zeal and devotion. Holiness is so beautiful in itself, and

so perfectly adorns the soul, that this should be a sufficient inducement for us to make it our study, and to practise its obligations with ardour and delight. But because self-love is essentially attached to our nature, God not only employs the arguments arising from his own perfections, when he wishes to persuade us to love him, but also those that arise from the love we have to our own interests. Thus in contracting his covenant with Adam and Eve, he not only makes known his will, but adds the promise of life, &c. In the same manner he has acted in the law he has given by Moses; and in the gospel he not only commands us to believe, but adds a promise. For the same reason, this apostle uses arguments deducible from self-interest to urge us to the study of holiness.

I. The masters in whose service men engage.—The greater part of men surrender themselves to sin. The strong man who obtains possession of soul and body, either through violence or subtlety, and exercises complete tyranny. The other master is God, our true, natural, ancient, legitimate Lord. How wretched the slaves of sin! How happy the servants of God!

II. The rewards which these masters give to those who serve them.

1. Sin gives death—not merely the first, but also the second death—death which the apostle opposes to *eternal* life. This death has three degrees:—(1.) Perturbed passions and a troubled conscience in this life. (2.) The separation of soul and body. (3.) Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.
2. God gives eternal life—reunion to himself. This likewise has three degrees:—(1.) Regeneration, in which men begin to live to God. (2.) The second is at the hour of their departure—they seem to die as the wicked, but in reality they widely differ—one dies to suffer

punishment of sin, the other to be delivered from sin.
(3.) The third is celestial blessedness.

III. The quality of these rewards: or how these masters respectively reward their servants.

1. Sin gives death as *wages*—nothing happens to wicked which they might not justly expect. Works are their own.
2. Eternal life is the *gift* of God. All the good in us comes from God. Our best deeds are infected with the original hereditary leprosy. We are not hired servants who have rendered a voluntary service, we are creatures, children—the recompense infinitely exceeds our service.

Consider: How disgraceful a master is sin; what remorse it causes; what punishment it inflicts. Give yourselves up to him who calls you with such affection and concern.

MICHAEL LE FAUCHEUR, 1660.

THE SONS OF GOD LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

ROMANS viii. 14.—“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

- I. A privilege.
 - II. A qualification of the privileged.
 - III. A universal predication of that privilege upon the persons qualified.
- I. A privilege: “They are the sons of God.”
1. They have a spiritual right to all God's creatures.
 2. They have an interest in God himself.
 3. They enjoy the guardianship of angels.
 4. They have an infallible claim to eternal glory.

II. A qualification, &c.: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God."—There are other signs of being a child of God besides this, mentioned in the text; as,
 1. Every child of God is like his Father. 2. He bears a filial love to his Father. 3. He has an awful reverence. 4. He depends upon his Father's provision.

What is it to be led by the Spirit of God?

1. The Spirit of God leads in the way of God's commands.
2. God's Spirit leads sweetly and gently.
3. In a constant progression.
4. Flesh and spirit are contrary.

Those that go in a known evil way; those that are led by vain imaginations; those carried by passion and dis-temper; those that make no progress; those that humour corrupt nature, are not led by the Spirit of God.

III. The connection of this privilege with the qualification.—To have a comfortable assurance of this privilege we must be led by the Holy Spirit.

1. In judgment (John xvi. 13.)
2. In disposition.
3. In practice (Ezekiel xxxvi. 27.)

BISHOP HALL, 1652.

THE DEITY OF CHRIST.

ROMANS ix. 5.—"Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

I. Examine Scripture proofs of the deity of Christ.

II. Show the importance and the improvement of this great article of our faith.

I. Examine Scripture proofs, &c.

1. Incommunicable titles are given him by Divine authority.

2. Perfections are ascribed to Christ which are peculiar to the supreme God.—(a) He is eternal. (b) He is immutable. (c) He is almighty. (d) He is omniscient. (e) He is omnipresent.
3. Works are ascribed to Christ, such as those to which none but the supreme God is equal.
4. Worship is given to Christ which only belongs to the supreme God.

II. The improvement and importance, &c.

1. It was absolutely necessary that Christ should be God, to fit him for executing that work which he so graciously undertook:—(a) None but God could accomplish his work on earth. (b) None but God would be equal to his work in heaven.
2. The deity of Christ is a powerful motive to admiration, obedience, love.
3. It is an inexhaustible fund of consolation.
4. It renders Jesus infinitely amiable to his people, and ought to do so to all.

SAMUEL HAYWARD, 1750.

THE PLENITUDE OF GOSPEL BLESSINGS.

ROMANS xv. 29.—“And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”

The sentiments of which such a mind as that of the great apostle of the Gentiles would be the subject, in contemplating a first visit to the world's metropolis, must be worthy of observation. It was not the throne of the Cæsars, or the centre of military power, or the birth-place of the arts, or the cradle of heroes, or the accumulated spoils of distant lands, or the structures of architectural magnificence; it was not the Forum, whose walls had echoed with so much eloquence; or the

Capitol, with its brazen gates; or the Coliseum, famed for its brutal-beast fights; or any of the various wonders that have attracted ordinary minds to the seven-hilled city. He had taste and learning, but all were absorbed in his love for souls; and he thought more of the poor saints, and the poorer heathen, than of all else. He did visit Rome, but how differently to his expectations—a prisoner, yet full of the impulse of gospel blessings—and what was his first thought: “The brethren came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage.”

I. The designation of the gospel.

II. The contents of the gospel.

III. The ministry of the gospel.

I. The designation: It is the “gospel of Christ.”—He is its author and finisher, its subject and centre, its alpha and omega. This its glory—it is the gospel of Christ. This is its superiority over all other systems; this the secret of its success.

II. The contents of the gospel: “Fulness of blessing.”—Its title is good tidings.

1. It supplies all spiritual knowledge.

2. It imparts all saving truth.

3. It furnishes all necessary consolation and support.

4. It is adapted for universal diffusion and universal acceptance.

III. The ministry of the gospel: “I am sure,” &c.—Its author has ordained its publication by men called and qualified by the Holy Spirit for the work. He has blessed, and continues to bless, its faithful promulgation.

1. How great their sin and danger who reject the gospel!

2. How momentous their responsibility who have received, to diffuse it!

EDITOR.

SINCERITY.

I CORINTHIANS v. 8.—“But with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

I. Let us inquire into the nature of gospel sincerity. Two words are used in the text signifying much the same thing—“sincerity and truth.” *Εὐλικρινεια* may signify “that which is best judged of in clear sunshine,” or “that which will bear sifting.” When sincerity and truth are recommended by the emblem unleavened bread, it denotes “*simplicity*,” which we find joined with “*godly simplicity*,” (2 Cor. i. 12). *Απλοτης*, *simplicity*, signifies “being without folds.” The description of the blessed man is given from his sincerity :* “In whose spirit there is no guile” (Psalm xxxii. 2; John i. 47.) Religious sincerity comprises,

1. A single intention and aim to please God.
2. An impartial inquiry into our duty.
3. Integrity, or making conscience of the whole compass of known duty.
4. Agreement between inward sentiments, and words or actions.

II. The importance of this qualification in all exercises of Christian temper and duty.

1. It is expressly required by Divine precepts. (Eph. iv. 24; Matt. xxii. 37; Josh. xxiv. 14; John iv. 23, 24; Heb. x. 22; 1 John iii. 18; Rom. xii. 8.)
2. It is indispensably necessary to our acceptance with God.
3. It is the only qualification that can administer solid satisfaction to ourselves upon reflection.
4. Sincerity is the easiest method of conduct.
5. Herein we shall copy the most illustrious examples.

* Does not the origin of our word *sincere* throw further light upon this subject—*sine cera*, “without wax”—*i. e.*, honey which is pure, unmixed, unadulterated?—EDITOR.

III. Application.

1. The defection of Christians here is a subject of sorrow.
2. By this we may judge of our acceptance with God.
3. A ground of humiliation—who is perfectly sincere?
4. A call to cultivate and advance in this excellent qualification.

DR JOHN EVANS, 1723.

THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

1 CORINTHIANS ix. 24.—“So run, that ye may obtain.”

The elegant imagery with which the Apostle Paul clothed his epistolary writings, has captivated many in their perusal who had little sympathy with the truths proclaimed. He knew how, by sanctified genius, to allure the lettered, and by simplicity to win the unrefined. Nor have these metaphors become obsolete with age. We find no difficulty in realising the interest that attached to the arena of the Grecian games—the breathless interest of myriads—the costly preparations—the starting place—the course—the goal—the competitors—the judge—the fading crown—are all familiar objects; and while we hear of them, we turn away to the facts of which they are only emblems. The reality is ours: the trumpet has sounded, and while ten thousand witnesses survey the course, the caution greets our ears, “So run, that ye may obtain.”

I. The comparison.

II. The caution.

III. The crown.

- I. The comparison.—The Christian life is here compared to a race. It involves,
 1. Ceaseless exertion.
 2. Constant advance.

3. The influence of competition.

II. The caution: "*So run,*" &c.

1. We must dispense with needless encumbrances.

2. Be free from besetting hindrances.

3. Exercise patience.

4. Be stimulated by gospel encouragements.

III. The crown: "That ye may obtain"—

A crown of glory, of righteousness, of life. Consider—The circumstances of its bestowment—the certainty of its attainment.

EDITOR.

ON TEMPTATION.

1 CORINTHIANS x. 13:—"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

I. What is temptation?

II. Whence come temptations? Permissively from God; externally and instrumentally from Satan, the world, or providential circumstances.

III. Why does God permit temptations?

1. To prove and develope the characters of men.

2. To shew his own power and wisdom in bringing good out of evil.

3. To strengthen the graces of sanctification in his people. It gives scope and exercise to those graces—it necessitates nearness to God and dependence upon Christ.

IV. How does God limit temptation?

1. By controlling the power and malice of the tempter.

2. By alleviating, providential circumstances.

3. By raising our strength proportionably.

V. What security have we that God will so limit temptation?

1. God is faithful: he will not break his word.

2. God is faithful: he will not falsify the assurances of his tender regard for even the least and weakest of his people.

VI. What are our duties in reference to temptation?

1. Beware of rushing headlong into danger.
2. Be armed against timidity and discouragement.
3. Resist to the uttermost.

D. KATTERNS.

THE EXCELLENCE OF CHARITY.

- 1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 8.—“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”

Charity, or love, is, in its largest sense, comprehensive of all vital religion, denoting a right disposition of mind towards all intelligent beings, particularly and above all to God himself, the fountain of being, perfection, and happiness.

- I. The moral dispositions of the soul are, in Scripture, compared with and preferred to positive institutions. (Micah vi. 6–8; Matt. xxiii. 23; Luke xiii. 26, 27; Matt. xxii. 37.)
- II. The moral dispositions of the soul are compared with and preferred to occasional and temporary virtues, (ver. 13.)
- III. Love, or charity, is compared with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and preferred to them. These were extraordinary gifts relating to Christian doctrine, its publication, and its proofs. They were necessary for the first formation and government of Christian societies. These were to fail and cease. Love is never to fail. This will be abundantly evident in the life to come.—Knowledge—holiness—blessedness in heaven, will raise this noble affection to its utmost activity and perfection.

IV. Conclusion.

1. The Christian church has little reason to regret the cessation of extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. The most essential, beautiful, and agreeable part of the system is charity that never faileth.
2. If we have a mind to bring down heaven to earth, to please our Saviour, edify his members, and advance religion, "let us follow after charity."
3. See the excellence of Christian religion.

H. GROVE, 1742.

THE LAST ENEMY DESTROYED.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 26.—"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

In this chapter the apostle directs the views of Christians to the final consummation of all things; when the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, in our nature, having answered the ends for which it was established, shall have been surrendered, "and God shall be all in all." This kingdom is, in the meantime, progressive, and will be so till all enemies shall be subdued and placed under his feet. The apostle brings in the words of the text as an instance of this general proposition; but it may be proper here to remark somewhat of inaccuracy in our common version. The correct reading of the text is, "Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed."

- I. The nature of that enemy that shall be destroyed; and why he is called "the last enemy."
 1. Death is an enemy, if we consider its effects in the dissolution of the human frame.
 2. He puts an end to all that is terrestrial with regard to man.
 3. He separates the tenderest ties of nature and affection.
 4. The moral and eternal consequences of death.

He is an *inexorable* enemy—an *impartial* enemy—he has *formidable harbingers* and *dreadful instruments*.

He is the *last* enemy of the church of God in its collective capacity, and of each individual believer.

II. Consider the manner, and the successive stages, in which our Lord Jesus has already conquered in part, and will completely conquer, this last enemy.

1. By his incarnation and passion he purchased a right, on behalf of the human race, to conquer death, and to triumph over it.
2. By his Spirit, Jesus gives the earnest and pledge of victory over the last enemy; he takes away the power of sin and communicates the principle of life.
3. When these preparatory measures have taken place, the empire of death shall be sapped to the foundation, and its power be utterly destroyed.

Believers:—Raise your eyes in adoration and gratitude to the blessed Saviour. How great are your privileges! How effectually these considerations ought to elevate you above the sorrows and afflictions of time.

Dying men:—You may have surmounted many difficulties, there is an enemy for you to encounter, and no power of your own can overcome. Prepare for death. Make an immediate application to the Saviour, and place entire confidence in him.

ROBERT HALL.

DEATH WITHOUT A STING.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 55.—“O death, where is thy sting?”

I. Death comes to a believer without a sting.

II. The believer may triumph over death.

- I. Death comes, &c.—In the death of believers three things are remarkable:—1. Their souls are immediately with Christ. 2. Their bodies are still united to Christ. 3. Their death is a sleep.

1. Sin like a sting pierces.
2. Sin like a sting pains.
3. Sin like a sting poisons.

Believers are delivered from the sting of death, because—

1. The Son of God became man, that he might be capable of suffering for believers.
2. Christ was made sin, that he might deliver believers from the sting.
3. Christ became obedient unto death, that he might un-sting death.
4. Christ loosed the pains of death.
5. Believers partake the benefits which he has procured.

Use 1. Information.—(1.) Death ceases to be a great enemy to believers. (2.) He ought not to be feared. (3.) The vast difference between the end of a believer and an unbeliever. (4.) Departed saints should not be mourned for without hope.

Use 2. Consolation.—(1.) At death sin is quite mortified. (2.) Believers at death take wing out of a troublesome world. (3.) They are set out of Satan's reach. (4.) They receive a crown of life.

Use 3. Exhortation.—(1.) Let it be your great care that the sting of death is taken out. Let your hearts be pricked for sin now. Believe that help lies in the Lord Jesus. Stick at no terms that you may partake of Christ Jesus. (2.) Labour after assurance that death's sting is extracted. If you are dead to sin, it is. If Christ be your life, it is.

II. The believer may triumph, &c.

1. Because Christ is risen.
2. Their resurrection is certain.
3. Christ has secured their peace and joy in death, as well as their safety.
4. Death is exceedingly gainful to them.
5. This is the last enemy.

NATH. VINCENT, 1674.

LABOUR AND REWARD OF A CHRISTIAN.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 58.—“Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

I. The nature of the service of God: “It is labour.”

II. The reward that sweetens this labour.

I. The nature, &c.—The Christian's work is laborious.

1. Because of the vast circumference of his duty. It extends to the moral law and the evangelical law.
2. The conditions required. (1.) It must spring from a supernatural principle. (2.) It must be performed with holy fervour. (3.) It must be done from a right motive to a right end.
3. Care that one part of his work do not hinder another.
4. He meets with great opposition. Flesh—World—Devil.

Why has God charged his people's work here with so much trouble? (1.) Because they shall have no trouble hereafter. (2.) That they may esteem the promised reward. (3.) That heaven may be sweeter.

There are many alleviations to the burden of Christian labour. (1.) Its suitableness to the renewed nature. (2.) The Divine assistance given. (3.) It is not equally laborious to all. (4.) The Lord is mercifully indulgent to failings.

II. The reward, &c.

1. There is a present reward. (1.) He gains skill and ability in the work. (2.) The special providence of God is engaged on his behalf. (3.) Inward peace and serenity.
2. The future reward. I. Consider its certainty: “Ye know.” (1.) From faith in God's testimony. (2.) His faith is the work of God. He is assured by Jesus Christ. He knows it by the Saviour's purchase. By the actual possession Christ has taken of heaven for the saints. By many express promises. II. Consider its excellency: The properties of that blessed state to which

they shall be advanced. It is purely spiritual. It is cumulative. It is perfect. It is constant and fixed. It is eternal. III. Compare his labours and his reward. One finite, the other infinite.

Why are so few found willing to labour for heaven? It is unseen to the eye of sense. It is future. Sinners do not like the nature of heaven.

The subject convicts some worldly men of a false slander, *e.g.*, such as bring a false report on the good ways of God. It convicts all worldly men of gross folly. That which they labour for they are not sure to obtain. If they succeed—it will leave them—deceive them—condemn them. Be persuaded to change your master.

To saints.—Let this glorious reward keep thee from accepting the rewards of sin. Let it make thee “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Live above this present world. Reconcile thy thoughts to death. Moderate your sorrow for departed saints.

W. GURNALL, 1671.

A CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

1 CORINTHIANS xvi. 19.—“With the church that is in their house.”

Some understand this of a settled, solemn, stated meeting of Christians for public worship at the house of Aquila and Priscilla; and they were glad of houses to meet in, where they wanted those better conveniences which the church was afterwards in her prosperous days accommodated with. Others think it is meant only of their own family, and the strangers within their gates—among whom there was so much piety that it might well be called a church. Thus the ancients generally understood it. Nor was it only Aquila and Priscilla whose house was thus celebrated for religion,

Nymphas also had a church in his house (Col. iv. 15; and Philemon 2.)

I. Show what this church in the house is, and when our families may be called churches.

1. Churches are societies devoted to God, called out of the world. We must give up our houses to the Lord (Deut. xx. 5; Gen. xxviii. 22.)
2. Churches are societies employed for God, pursuant to this dedication. Three things are necessary to this:—*Doctrine—Worship—Discipline.* *Keep up family doctrine*—read the Scriptures to your families; catechise children and servants; consider what children are designed for, what they are capable of, what their eternal destiny may be. *Keep up family worship*—make acknowledgments of your dependence upon God; make family confessions of sin; offer up family thanksgivings; present family petitions; make family intercessions. *Keep up family discipline*—countenance everything that is good and praiseworthy in children and servants; discountenance everything that is evil in them.

II. Motives to persuade you to turn your families into churches.

1. God will come and dwell with you in them. This will make relations comfortable, affairs successful, enjoyments sweet, and all things pure—a tent will be turned to a temple, a cottage to a palace.
2. If you make your houses little churches, God will make them little sanctuaries.
3. If you have not a church in your house, it is to be feared that Satan will have a seat there.
4. A church in the house will be very comfortable to yourselves.
5. A church in the house will be a good legacy.
6. It will contribute to the prosperity of the church of God in the nation.

III. Application.

1. Let those who have neglected family religion be persuaded to set it up.

2. Let those who have suspended family worship revive it.
3. Let those who are negligent in family worship be awakened to zeal and constancy.
4. Let those who have a church in their house be careful to adorn and beautify it by their conversation.
5. Let those who are setting out in the world set up a church in their house at once.
6. In all removes take the church with your house.
7. Promote religion in the family in which you live.
8. Let solitary people have churches in their chambers.
9. Consult the welfare of your souls in the choice of your settlement.
10. Let religious families commune one with another.
11. Let houses with churches have comfort in them.

MATTHEW HENRY, 1704.

THE TEMPER AND CONDUCT OF THE PRIMITIVE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 5.—“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

The apostle observes, that what had *happened to him* with regard to his imprisonment at Rome, though it seemed to bear so melancholy an aspect, yet did fall out, by the special providence of God, for *the furtherance of the gospel*. We may justly apply the same reflection to several other very afflictive circumstances of his life. The attack made upon his character and interest at Corinth, laid him under a necessity of saying many things he would gladly have omitted, and of mentioning circumstances which had otherwise perhaps remained unknown. He was obliged to say something which might look like an encomium on himself, and

therefore he chooses to speak in the name of all his faithful brethren, as well as his own.

I. The account which the apostle gives of his own conduct, and that of his brethren in the Christian ministry.

II. The principles by which they were influenced.

III. Reflections on the whole subject.

I. The account, &c.

1. The apostles did not make themselves the chief end of their ministry.—They did not seek their own applause and reputation; they were not governed by a view to the possessions of the present life; they did not arrogate to themselves secular power, or pretend to authority over the civil liberties of mankind.
2. They faithfully devoted their ministry to the service of Christ.—Christ was the great subject of their preaching. They established the truth of his Deity, the mystery of his incarnation, the necessity of his atonement, the perfection of his righteousness, the riches of his grace. They did this in such a manner as might most effectually establish his empire over the hearts and consciences of men.
3. They endeavoured to serve their great Master by the most humble and affectionate condescension to those committed to their care.—They did all this for the sake of Christ and his gospel.

II. The principles by which they were animated.

1. Grateful affection to the blessed Redeemer.
2. Pious zeal for the glory of God in the salvation of souls.
3. The securing of their own present and future happiness.

III. Reflections, &c.

How greatly is the truth of Christianity confirmed by the character of its first advocates.

How happy is it for the Christian cause that their original monuments are still preserved.

Let us bless God that in the midst of general depravation he has maintained a succession of faithful pastors.

Let us daily bow our knees in importunate supplication that this happy number may be increased.

DR DODDRIDGE.

THE DIVINITY OF THE GOSPEL PROVED BY THE FRAILTY OF ITS APOSTLES.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 7.—“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

I. The excellency of the gospel: It is a “treasure.”

1. A treasure of light and knowledge.
2. A treasure of holiness in its morality, precepts, motives, and assistance afforded.
3. A treasure of consolation.
4. A universal treasure.

II. The frailty of the apostles who proclaimed it: “In earthen vessels.”

1. As men subject to the corruptions of the flesh.
2. As men of obscurity.
3. As poor.
4. As illiterate in the world's esteem.
5. As persecuted.

III. The conclusion drawn from these facts: “That the excellency,” &c.

1. The gospel has dissipated the darkness of the human heart, and wrought these results which could only be ascribed to God.
2. It has surmounted all obstacles with power and rapidity. Its triumphs are such as no human power could effect.

IV. Application.

1. How foolish is unbelief of the truth, how glorious the power of God in the gospel.
2. Let this gospel occupy our thoughts and control our lives.
3. Let preachers see the source of their success.
4. Let our flocks learn to respect and cherish their pastors.

F. J. DURAND, 1770.

THE HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 1.—“For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

I. The earthly house and its destiny.

The body is “a house”—the soul its guest, inmate, host; more excellent, &c.

This body is “earthly.” It is made of the dust. How humiliating!

It is but “a tabernacle”—frail, temporary, perishable.

It must be “dissolved”—taken to pieces. The causes of this.

1. What ideas shall we indulge respecting the destiny of the body?
2. What influence should its destiny exercise upon us?

II. The house not made with hands.

1. Its description.—It is not the resurrection body, or the apostle would have said, “We *shall* have a house,” &c. He speaks of a house already built—eternal in the heavens. Thus he furnishes encouragements under afflictions. He represents the soul as not encumbered with the ruined body, but as absent from the body—present with the Lord. Heaven is this dwelling: “The glory of this latter house,” &c. (Haggai ii. 9.)
2. Whence arises this certainty? “We know.” It is not the discovery of reason, but of revelation—subject of Scripture promises.

III. The influence which this confidence should exercise.

1. Comfort against fears of death.
2. Consolation under loss of pious dead.
3. Superiority to the attractions of time and earth.

ANTOINE CLARION.

THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE JUDGMENT.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 10.—“We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Besides instruction and exhortation, there are only two ways in the ordinary course of Divine providence by which man is wrought upon, viz., hope of reward, and fear of punishment. If anything will rouse from spiritual lethargy, it must be an apprehension of, and meditation on the last judgment; therefore, although the words may be considered as matter of consolation to the righteous, they will on this occasion be handled in the severer sense, that of terror. The intention of this sermon is,

I. To convince every man's conscience that there shall be indeed such an appearance, or such a general trial or doom of all mankind after this life, as is here spoken of. This may be proved by the dictates of reason and the light of nature.

1. Because it is very agreeable to the nature of God.
2. Because it is consonant to the nature of the soul of man.
3. Because it is necessary for the manifestation of the Divine justice.
4. Because the disproportion between merits and rewards in this life, seems to require such a judgment.
5. Because there is an inbred notion in all men, that there will be such a judgment.

II. To inquire what manner of thing this judgment, or last doom, will be. In the description of which we have,

1. The Judge.
2. The parties to be judged.
3. The matters for which they will be tried.
4. The form of the trial.
5. The sentence and its execution.

III. By way of application, to shew how much all men are concerned in this judgment. If there be such a judgment, we may conclude,

1. That the greatest pretenders to wisdom are not the wisest men.
2. We may learn the folly of hypocrisy—presumptuous, profane sin.

The best course we can take is to judge ourselves, and to meditate daily on,

1. The vanity and shortness of life.
2. The certainty and uncertainty of our death.
3. The exactness and severity of the judgment.
4. The immutability of every man's condition in the other world.

DR R. SOUTH.

CHRIST MADE SIN FOR US.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 21.—“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Before I proceed to the particulars proposed, let me observe some things that are supposed, as,

1. That by the fall, mankind was in a condition that wanted relief, and needed pardon and remission.
2. That mankind has all along supposed that an atonement was needed over and above repentance.
3. That we are, without question, to take it for granted that God will not remit sin without an atonement.
4. We are to consider upon what terms we are to have the benefit of such atonement.

I. What Christ did when he was made sin for us?—Consider the qualifications of a sacrifice for sin.

1. Designation.
2. Substitution.
3. Purity.
4. The vast difference between the legal sacrifices and that of Christ.

II. What was there in Christ's being made sin for us, that could be the reason of making us righteous?

That God might manifest his justice and holiness. He condemned sin in the flesh.

III. How far Christ's being made sin conduces to making us righteous? There is requisite on God's part a disposition to pardon; on our part, a capacity for pardon.

IV. Christ's being made a sacrifice for us, is a powerful argument for our being reconciled unto God.

1. It is the Creator stooping to the creature.
2. It is God reconciling the perverse offspring of a degenerate parent.
3. It is no meaner a person than the Son of God.
4. The object: that we might be dealt with as if we had never offended.

DR J. WILLIAMS, 1695.

PRINCIPLES ON WHICH A PROFESSION OF RELIGION SHOULD BE MADE.

2 CORINTHIANS vi. 17, 18.—“Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

It is the duty of every man to make a profession of religion; but this obligation supposes a previous obligation to embrace religion, and to become a sincere Christian. The importance of just views on this subject will be apparent from two considerations: One, that a profession of religion is one of the most important steps in life; the other, that the whole character and usefulness of a professed Christian will probably depend on the feelings with which he enters the church.

I. There should be a true conversion to God.—This is implied in the very nature of a profession; the Bible so

speaks of it. The Lord's Supper is not designed to be a converting ordinance. Few or none are converted after entering the church.

II. There should be in fact, as in form, a separation from the world.

1. You are not to partake of the sins of the world.
2. You are not to partake of the amusements of the world, *as such*.
3. There *are* great matters of entire innocence and propriety, in which the Christian can act in common with this world.
4. We are to associate with people of the world so far as we can do them good.

III. You are to abandon whatever is inconsistent with the honest purpose to be a whole-hearted Christian.

1. The supreme love of money.
2. An evil course of life.
3. Evil companions.
4. Even kindred, for the sake of Christ.
5. Allied to this calling, you should be willing to abandon any other.
6. If you are not prepared to abandon any calling contrary to the Bible and good morals, you should not enter the church.

IV. We should come into the church with a fixed purpose to do our whole duty as it may be made known to us by God.

V. Resolving that we will be as eminent as we possibly can be.

VI. We should be warm and decided friends of revivals.

VII. We should be warm and decided friends of every proper plan for the salvation of the world.

VIII. The profession of religion is obviously much more than a form and a name.

ALBERT BARNES.

THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL ON THE SOULS OF MEN.

2 CORINTHIANS x. 4, 5.—“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

- I. All mankind, in their present state of apostacy, have revolted from God, and surrendered themselves slaves to sin and Satan.
- II. God has set on foot an important expedition for their recovery.
- III. Sinners in various ways oppose this benevolent design.
- IV. The terms of surrender.
 1. The sinner surrenders himself as an obnoxious rebel, lying entirely at the mercy of the conqueror.
 2. He surrenders entirely upon the terms prescribed by the conqueror.
 3. He submits voluntarily and cheerfully.
 4. He makes a universal surrender of himself and all he has to Jesus Christ.
- V. The true convert's state in consequence of this reconciliation.

PRESIDENT DAVIES.

PAUL'S RAPTURE.

2 CORINTHIANS xii. 1-4.—“It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory: I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell: or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth,) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I

cannot tell: God knoweth,) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

This, which is one of the most illustrious events in the life of the apostle, his humility would have robbed us of, if it had not been that necessity arose to justify his ministry, and to vindicate the honour and authority of his apostleship.

The secret was unfolded to us on this wise:—There were certain teachers at Corinth who boasted of their external advantages, and especially of this, that they had seen Jesus in the flesh, and because Paul had not been thus privileged, they took occasion to throw contempt upon his person and his preaching. To show that he was not inferior to these in anything, that he shared their privileges, that he was superior to them, he relates this rapture into heaven (see chap. xi. verse 21, *et seq.*)

I. Consider the different circumstances of the apostle's rapture.

1. Paul was honoured with revelations of the Saviour.
2. That these revelations were of the same kind with those experienced by other men.—The audible voice—visions by day and night.
3. That beside these, he was the subject of extraordinary communications.
4. The locality into which he was taken: The third heaven—paradise.
5. The period of the occurrence: "Fourteen years ago." Some think identical with the trance in the Temple (Acts xxii.); others, at the period of his conversion; others, at entering upon his apostleship.
6. The circumstances which transpired in this rapture: "Heard unspeakable words."

II. Some reflections upon this history.

1. Why was this apostle selected for this privilege? He is the Moses of gospel. He was to learn from God all

that belonged to "the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ."

2. To make him superior to the difficulties of his work.
3. It is as fit to confirm our faith as that of the apostle—there is really a life to come.
4. We also shall be raised—not during life as he—not doubtfully as to the body—not temporarily—we shall not only hear, but see.

ANTOINE CLARION.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE.

2 CORINTHIANS xii. 9.—"My grace is sufficient for thee."

God never afflicts his children without taking care to furnish powerful means of support, and triumphant deliverance.—He suffers his ancient people to fall into the hands of the Egyptians, &c., but at length he casts his eye upon the captive nation, and sends Moses to their relief; he permits the three companions of Daniel to be precipitated into a burning furnace, but they are cheered with the presence of a heavenly messenger. This truth never appeared more clearly than in the person of that great apostle St Paul, whom, amidst all his diversified trials, God always graciously assisted. [Circumstances out of which text arises.]

- I. Observe that Jesus Christ speaks of grace as being his, and properly belonging to him—he has merited and acquired it by his sufferings—the matter of his preaching—his proper work—it is his by virtue of his intercession.
- II. However great may be the number of our offences, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is yet greater.
 1. Since it is sufficient to justify us before God, what more can we reasonably desire?

2. It is sufficient to regenerate us to a new life, and to produce habits of holiness.
3. Grace cannot be sufficient unless it is efficacious.

III. However sad and deplorable our condition may be in this world, this grace is efficacious to console us.—It comforts with sweet assurances of reconciliation, occupies our minds with the consideration of future good—it supports under trials of every sort.

IV. Learn what ought to be the principal end of our desires.—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is more valuable than all the riches of the miser, the vain-glory of the ambitious, the pleasures of the world. Its possessor is satisfied and contented beyond all conception. Would we enjoy it? Let us conform ourselves to its teachings.

JEAN GUILLEBERT, 1680.

THE UNITY OF ALL TRUE BELIEVERS.

GALATIANS iii. 28.—“For ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

In the early ages of the foundation of the Christian church, a great work had to be accomplished in the fusion of the different elements of which it was to be composed into one harmonious body. Diversities of nationality had to be reconciled—discrepancies of civil condition required to be toned down—distinctions of sex must be less marked in the enjoyment of religious privilege—discordant characters and conflicting sentiments were to blend into brotherhood, and the fact upon which this grand assimilation of feeling was then produced, and is to be repeated throughout all lands, is this, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one

in Christ Jesus.”—It is necessary to bear in mind that the individuals of whom this sublime union is affirmed are all *in* Jesus Christ. They are united to him as their vital head, incorporated into one spiritual body, animated by one Spirit; and this alliance is designed to obliterate all minor distinctions, and absorb all details of character and condition.

I. They are all *one* in sentiment towards the Saviour, &c.—Upon lesser themes they differ very materially, but they all hold the head, Christ. They never were, and never will be, in this world, of one mind upon all points, even of Divine truth. Exclude the right to think and believe for one's self, incarcerate conscience, paralyse speech, and you may produce uniformity; but it will be the uniformity of death. So far from its being wonderful that Christian men see so differently upon many topics, the wonder is that they are so harmonious here. This sublime assimilation of thought is unparalleled in the history of mind. Each division of the grand army of the King of kings, and every man, is sworn by the Spirit to the solemn oath, “Unto us there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.”

II. They are all *one* in spiritual privilege.

1. They are equally objects of Divine love.
2. They are all redeemed, sanctified, and saved by the same process.
3. They have equal admission to means of grace.

III. They are all *one* in the same bright anticipations.

—The principle and bond of union will be the same there *in* Jesus Christ; its development inconceivably superior to the present. No imperfection of knowledge, no separation into societies, no earthly leaderships, no tinge of peculiarity will mar that perfect happiness.

IV. The practical use of this truth.

1. All should strive for the visible manifestation of this union. Because of its influence on the church and the world.
2. In order to this we must cultivate more love to Christ himself.

EDITOR.

THE FIGHT OF THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT.

GALATIANS v. 17.—“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

This state of warfare which St Paul describes in the text, and which is common to all the faithful, ought to produce in us these four sentiments:—

- I. A sentiment of grief at our sad condition.
- II. An ardent recourse to that grace, which is so necessary in the conflicts we have to sustain.
- III. A redoublement of care and watchfulness on our part.
- IV. The desire of attaining a condition more holy, more happy, more perfect.

HENRI CHATELAIN.

GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

GALATIANS vi. 14.—“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- I. Explain the apostle's meaning.
- II. Justify his decision.
- III. Apply.
- I. Explain, &c.
 1. He had a high esteem of the sufferings of Christ, as of the greatest moment, and worthy of the highest regard.

2. He had a strong though humble confidence of his own relation to, and interest in them.
3. He had such a sense of the comparative worth of the cross, as prompted him to public profession of esteem, with a contempt of those who set themselves in opposition to it.

He would not glory—1. In his learning as a scholar, though the object of his regard brought upon him the derision and contempt of other scholars. His attention was so much engrossed, that all other knowledge or honour seemed unworthy of regard. He disregarded embellishments in his evangelical labours, seeking the honour of his Saviour, not his own. 2. In his privileges as a Jew. 3. In his personal character and activity for Christ.

II. Show what reason every Christian has to glory in the cross.

1. The glory of Divine perfection shines in it, in the brightest manner.
2. The riches of Divine grace are manifested in the cross, to the most astonishing degree.
3. Its efficacious power as a principle of salvation.

Application.

Learn what is the great, leading doctrine of the gospel. See the guilt and danger of the enemies of the cross, who have no sense of their own unworthiness, the evil of sin, or the necessity of an atonement; or who are governed by a spirit directly opposite to that of the cross. Let this serve to support believers in all their trials—a sight of Christ's sufferings.

DR WITHERSPOON, 1768.

ADOPTION.

EPHESIANS i. 5.—“The adoption of children by Jesus Christ.”

Nothing is easier than to be eloquent upon the fatherhood of God. Even heathen writers could con-

ceive sentiments not unworthy of being recorded in the inspired volume, and made a ground of argument against the folly of idolatry. "As certain also of your own poets," &c. The Almighty is the universal Father of mankind, because he is the creator, preserver, and governor of all. But he sustains that relationship, not to man exclusively; it links the *inferior creatures* as closely as ourselves. When believers in Jesus Christ are in the New Testament called the children of God, and are represented as partaking of unspeakable dignity and blessedness in that capacity, it must be evident that a much closer connection is contemplated, and that the name Father must have, with respect to true Christians, a far higher and more extensive signification. [Define adoption.]

I. The magnitude of the privilege.

II. The benefits that flow from it.

III. The evidences by which its possession may be known.

IV. The duties which it imposes on those on whom it is conferred.

I. The magnitude of this privilege.

1. The glory of that Being by whom we are adopted.
2. The cost at which it was procured.
3. Of what this inheritance consists.
4. The manner in which it is conferred.

II. The benefits and comforts that flow from it.

1. The spirit of adoption.
2. God will take care of and protect us.
3. He will compassionate our infirmities.
4. In affliction he intends our eternal good.

III. The evidences by which it may be known.

1. The image of the Father.
2. Filial affection, not slavish terror, in his service.
3. Love to the brethren.

IV. The duties which this relation imposes.

Walk worthy of your high vocation; be subject to the Father's will both in doing and suffering; be mindful of your relative duties to your spiritual kindred; let your hearts be at home.

D. KATTERNS.

GRACE AND FAITH.

EPHESIANS ii. 8.—“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

I. Consider how we may be said to be *saved through faith*.

1. Faith is so absolutely necessary to our salvation, that we cannot possibly be saved without it.
2. Everyone who hath this faith shall undoubtedly be saved.
3. After all, a believer is not to ascribe his salvation to the merit and excellency of this faith itself, but entirely to the merit and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the free grace of God as manifested in it.

II. How it appears that in consequence of this we are *saved by grace*.

1. Faith cannot make any atonement to the offended justice of God, so as to give us any legal claim even to the pardon of our sins upon account of it; so that if we are saved through faith, we must in this view acknowledge it to be by grace.
2. Faith can confer no obligation upon God to bestow on us eternal blessedness.

There had been no room to mention faith at all in this affair, had not God graciously contrived such a method of salvation, and done that to effect it, which none but himself could do.

Inquire: Can you trace faith in its production in your souls; and in its genuine effects in your hearts and lives?

III. Examine the force of the apostle's additional argument which is drawn from the consideration, that *faith is the gift of God*.

1. God reveals the great objects of faith.
2. He inclines the mind to attend to them.
3. He conquers the natural aversion of the heart to the gospel.
4. He carries on this blessed work, and maintains this Divine principle.

IV. Inferences.

1. We have no reason to glory.
2. We have great reason to be thankful.
3. Neglect of this salvation is highly inexcusable.
4. We should labour for the increase of this blessed principle.
5. There is encouragement for the weakest soul to seek salvation.
6. Let us take heed that we do not bring a reproach upon this doctrine by licentiousness.

DR DODDRIDGE.

THE NATURE AND BEAUTY OF GOSPEL WORSHIP.

EPHESIANS ii. 18.—“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

In the foregoing verses the apostle makes mention of a double reconciliation, wrought by the blood of the cross: the one of the Jews and Gentiles unto God; the other of the same persons one to another. There were two things in the law—first, worship instituted under it; secondly, the curse annexed to it. The first of these being appropriated to the Jews, with an exclusion of the Gentiles, was the cause of unspeakable enmity between them; the latter was a cause of enmity between God and both of them. The Lord Jesus Christ in his death removing both these, wrought the twofold reconciliation mentioned. “He brake down the middle wall of partition,” (ver. 14); and by the cross at his death he slew the enmity, (ver 16.)

It is an eminent effect and fruit of our reconciliation to God, and among ourselves, by the blood of Christ, that believers enjoy the privileges of the spiritual worship of God revealed in the gospel.

I. We obtain the privilege of gospel worship as a fruit of the reconciliation made by the blood of Christ. (See Heb. ix. 8; x. 19-22; Ephes. ii. 4, 5.)

II. That the worship of God under the gospel is so excellent, beautiful, and glorious, that it may well be esteemed a privilege purchased by the blood of Christ.

I. Absolutely so:—

1. Each person in the Sacred Trinity affords the souls of the worshippers distinct communion.
2. It is an access unto God—a drawing near unto God himself as a Father.
3. The cause of this privilege is Jesus Christ.—He has procured this favour—he has opened the way—entered before us—he is High Priest.
4. We have it by the Holy Spirit.—He discovers the mind of God by causing diligent attention to Divine Word. He gives spirituality of mind. He discovers our wants to us. He works faith, love, fervency.

II. Comparatively:—

1. All the worship of the former dispensation was of God's appointment.
2. He so ordered it, that it should be beautiful and glorious. Nevertheless it was not comparable to the glory of the spiritual worship of the New Testament.
1. The temple was the seat of this worship: at best an earthly house. Our temple is the body of Christ—the persons of the saints—Heaven itself.
2. The priest was Aaron. Christ is our only priest.
3. Their sacrifices were glorious. We have a better sacrifice, (Heb. ix. 23.)

THE CHURCH EDIFYING ITSELF IN LOVE.

EPHESIANS iv. 16.—“ Maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.”

In these words there are four propositions worthy of observation:—

- I. The church of Christ is compared to a body.
 - II. This body of Christ is imperfect in this world, and therefore should be continually increasing.
 - III. The body of Christ should diligently endeavour the edifying of itself.
 - IV. The more love abounds in the church, the more it will be edified.
- I. The church of Christ is compared to a body.
 1. The life of the body depends upon its conjunction with the head.
 2. The head has a mighty influence upon the body.
 3. The body has many members, and these members have different offices.
 4. The body is fitly joined and compact together.
 5. The body is sustained by nourishment conveyed to all parts.
 6. The members of the body are operative for the good of the whole.
 7. The whole body is animated by one soul.

The church is a body of men: governed by the best laws, possessed of great beauty and strength.

- II. This body is imperfect, &c.
 1. In its numbers.—Many who have heard the gospel shall be yet converted. Many as yet unborn will be born again. The Jews are to be grafted in. The kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.
 2. In its graces.—Knowledge is imperfect. Holiness is

imperfect. The victory over spiritual enemies is incomplete. Joy and happiness are not yet consummated.

III. The body of Christ should diligently, &c.—Here the metaphor is changed from a body to a building.

The foundations upon which it is to grow: knowledge of God—Christ the rock—doctrine of apostles—obedience and good works.

IV. The more love abounds, &c.

Love enlarges supplication—inclines to peace—produces condescension—promotes activity.

NATHANAEL VINCENT, M.A., 1660.

THE IMITATION OF GOD.

EPHESIANS v. 1.—“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.”

Most excellent advice, and a most suitable motive to enforce it. This imitation must be considered as partial. Even in those things in which we may and ought to imitate God, our imitation will be very imperfect. Though there never can be an exact resemblance, yet there ought to be growing conformity to God. The light and strength by which we follow God must be received from him.

I. The advice given.

II. The motive by which it is enforced.

I. The advice: “Be ye followers, &c.—This imitation may respect,

1. His moral excellence.
2. The government of temper and conduct.
3. Our conduct in our families.
4. Our conduct as church members.
5. We should be known as such in the world.
6. We should imitate God by unwearied activity.

II. The motive: "As dear children."—This relation implies the warmest and tenderest affection—an interest in the greatest privileges—special care of Divine providence—grace here, and glory hereafter.

As children, and dear children:—

1. God's eye is more particularly upon us.
2. We are under greater obligations.
3. We have greater helps and advantages.
4. Other children resemble their parents, so should God's.

B. BEDDOME.

REDEEMING THE TIME.

EPHESIANS v. 16.—"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

We cannot understand this literally, for strictly speaking, time once lost is irretrievable; it is like a current that is ever passing before us, and that particle of it which has once gone by never returns. But in a figurative sense, there is such a thing as retrieving lost time, and thus by making the best, the most important use of what remains.

- I. What is implied by the language, viz., that a great portion of our time hitherto has been lost.
- II. In what manner we are to recover it.
- III. The motive held up to induce us.
- I. What is implied.—Has not all that time which has been spent in the service of sin and Satan been lost! All that portion of time devoted to self-gratification is lost. Time lost in sinful indulgences—slothful neglect—idle amusements—poring over the ills of life—inordinate anxiety about the future.
- II. What means do the Scriptures furnish us with for the recovery of lost time.—Let us see to it that matters are right between God and our souls. See

to it, that motives of action are right. Pursue nothing that will not bear your asking the Divine blessing upon it. Let us be careful that we keep right by living near to God. Attend to every duty according to its proportion. Whatsoever we do for God or our fellow-creatures, let us do it with our might.

III. The motive: "The days are evil"—either moral evil or natural evil. How much sinful evil to oppose—to be diligent in correcting—faithful in opposing. We may understand it of affliction—we are subject to such visitations—sickness may lay you aside—old age will creep upon you—reverses of fortune may await you. The uncertainty of human enjoyments is a reason why we should use them while we have them, lest God should call upon us to give an account of our stewardship, declaring we shall be no longer stewards.

ANDREW FULLER.

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

EPHESIANS v. 18.—"Be filled with the Spirit."

Intemperance greatly prevailed in the heathen world; and even in some of the feasts of their gods, wherein it was commonly esteemed not only lawful, but commendable, to indulge in gluttony and drunkenness. The converts at Ephesus saw this feature among their neighbours, and probably were themselves in previous times addicted to it; and therefore the apostle warns them against their old sins, and enforces the caution by putting them in mind of the bad effects of intemperance. Instead of such criminal pleasures, he invites them to the sacred and solid pleasure which is to be had by means of the Holy Spirit.

- I. The meaning of the phrase.
- II. What is implied in the exhortation.
- III. The obligations to the fulfilment of the exhortation.

I. The meaning, &c.

1. What are we to understand by the Spirit?—The third sacred person in the Trinity (Heb. ix. 14; Rom. viii. 9; Gal. iv. 6; Luke iv. 1; Acts vi. 5; vii. 55; xi. 24.) The gracious influences and operations of this blessed agent upon the mind. The genuine fruits of the Holy Spirit produced in us.
2. What is implied by our being filled with the Spirit?—His sufficiency to fill our souls, supply all our spiritual wants, and help all our infirmities. An actual participation of his influences in a plentiful measure. This becomes the case as every faculty of the soul is more subject to the Spirit's authority—as the several kinds of his operation are experienced—as his agency is more stated and constant—as his grace is more weighty and operative—as the sweetness of these influences urges on to perfection.

II. What is implied, &c.

1. That every one should esteem it a most desirable thing.—It is perfective of our nature—it would make us objects of Divine complacency—bring honour to God—make us proof against temptation—fit us for communion with God—confer pleasure and peace—it is heaven begun.
 2. It is an attainable good.—This is evident from the Spirit's own gracious benignity and declared inclination—from the purchase and intercession of Christ—from the nature of the Spirit's work—from the described character of the gospel—from the declarations of God—from instances of grace in others—from beginnings of his saving work in ourselves.
 3. That something is incumbent upon us.
- (1.) Upon unconverted.—Nothing can deserve his communications; no mere natural power can secure them; the use of appointed means is only likely source of the blessing. They should diligently seek Christian knowledge—

personally apply Scripture truth—abstain from known obstructions to his gracious influences—observe and improve tender seasons—earnestly pray for sanctifying grace—attempt the entire surrender of themselves to God in Christ.

- (2.) Upon the converted.—It is incumbent to maintain strong and habitual desires after the increase of the Spirit's influence; all sacred institutions must be diligently attended; everything that tends to quench his operations should be carefully guarded against; the Spirit should be distinctly recognised; improve all his influences as they are felt.

III. The obligations, &c.

1. The clear revelation we possess concerning his agency, in comparison with former ages.
2. The dignity of his person.
3. His relation to Christ.
4. Our relation to Christ will be then most clearly proved.
5. We shall be vessels of honour, &c. (2 Tim. ii. 21.)
6. So an entrance will be ministered, &c. (2 Pet. i. 11.)

Improvement.

1. Admire the wisdom and grace of the gospel dispensation.
2. The imperfection of saints is no disparagement to Christianity, but a disgrace and shame to themselves.
3. See the proper Christian disposition towards the Holy Spirit.

DR JOHN EVANS. 1723.

CHRIST THE BELIEVER'S GAIN IN LIFE AND DEATH.

PHILIPPIANS 1. 21.—“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

In the words of our text, we have a good day's work, and a good evening's wages, and night's rest.

I. Christ is a true Christian's life.—1. He is so, as the efficient cause—the author and preserver of that life. 2. He is so, as the believer lives not to himself, but to Christ.

1. As the vital principle from which he acts.
2. As the example and pattern which he follows.
3. As the honour of Christ is his main end.
4. As he is subject of life—the whole man being fully taken up with Christ—in thought, desire, comfort, joy, and delight—he speaks much of Christ—his service is the business of a believer's life—all is subordinate to him.

II. Death is gain to the godly.

1. It ends all sin.
2. It terminates all misery, sorrow, fear, perplexity.
3. It perfects all graces.
4. It completes their happiness.

Use 1. Consider the blessedness of the believer in both life and death.

2. Labour to attain to this happiness—undervalue the world more—value Christ more—improve the talents entrusted to thee—add perseverance—remember the connection of these words, “To me to live is Christ,” and then, “to die is gain.”
3. Be superior to fear of death.
4. Estimate all gain by this test—Will it prove a gain in death? Sin will not—worldly profit will not—external profession will not.

DR ANTHONY TUCKNEY, 1658.

CHRIST IS BEST, OR ST. PAUL'S STRAIT.

PHILIPPIANS i. 23, 24.—“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”

I. St Paul's strait.—The servants of God are often-

times in great straits; some things are so exceedingly bad, that we ought immediately to abominate them as temptations to sin—to distrust, to despair. Some things are so good, that we ought immediately to cleave to them. Deliberation here argues weakness. But some things are ambiguous, requiring our best consideration, such was Paul's strait in this instance.

II. His desires that caused this strait.—They were spiritual—not so much after happiness as holiness. They proceeded from a taste of sweetness in communion with Christ. They were constant, efficacious.

“To depart.”—Death is but a departing—loosing from the shore, going home.

“To be with Christ.”—Heaven is not heaven without Christ; true love is carried to the person.

III. The reasons of both.

1. To be with Christ is better for me.—It is better than all graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit here—better than conflict—God reserves the best till last. This apostle had loosed his affections from earthly things. He laboured to keep a clear conscience; he was assured of union to Christ; he sweetened thoughts of death.

2. “To abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”—The lives of worthy men are very needful for the church of God; their counsel and direction; their reformation of abuses; they carry God's blessing with them; their example is beneficial; their prayers useful; they have a spirit of love; spirit of Christ.

IV. His resolution after all being willing, for the good of the church, still to abide here.—All is not reserved for heaven, a Christian has happiness here.

THE LIGHTS OF THE WORLD.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 16.—“Holding forth the word of life.”

Who does not admire the starry heavens? When all this lower world is wrapt in darkness, and nothing here is visible, then may be seen those wondrous works of God, which are so beautiful in themselves, and exhibit so much of his power, and of the extent of the universe. Night itself reveals them, and the deeper its shadows, the more resplendently they shine. Such is the comparison which the apostle here institutes. Christians are placed in a world dark through ignorance and sin; they are surrounded by the children of disobedience; they pass their lives in the midst of corrupt manners and blind perversity. What the luminaries are in heaven, they are to be on earth; clearly distinguishable for moral beauty and lustre—moving in their proper spheres, and shedding light and influence all around them. All are not equal in magnitude and splendour, but all are *lights*, and the more they shine, the more God is glorified, the church adorned, the world illuminated.

I. The character of the gospel: “The word of life.”

II. How it becomes comparable to a light held forth.

III. Motives collected from the subject.

I. The character, &c.—The gospel is the word of life:

1. As it proceeds from the great, first fountain of life.
2. Because its subject is *life*.
3. Because of the vital influence God has given it, and exercises by it.
4. Because the life which it imparts it maintains till it is crowned with immortal perfection.

Consider: 1. The excellence of this spiritual life. 2. That

the great concern of Christians, in order to be useful to their fellow-creatures, is to hold it forth.

II. How this word of life becomes comparable, &c.

1. The reception of the gospel fills the mind with sanctified intelligence.
2. It renders the whole character illustrious; morally and spiritually resplendent.

There are two respects in which true religion is a light to others: 1. The steady holding forth of gospel doctrine is an antidote to all false and pernicious opinions. 2. The consistent holding forth of gospel doctrine in the life and example commends the excellence of the religion of Christ in the eyes of the world.

III. Motives collected, &c.

1. You are bound to hold forth the word of life because sons of God. All privileges carry with them corresponding obligations.
2. Because all that you have received you have received from Divine grace.
3. On account of the condition of the world in which you dwell,

ANONYMOUS.

THE BELIEVER PRESSING FORWARD.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 13, 14.—“This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Vanity or idleness often renders the most promising designs abortive, and causes the best concerted enterprises to miscarry. A vain and presumptuous spirit is inflated with what it has already done, and deems what yet remains not worthy of concern. An idle and cowardly man, fatigued with the commencement of the work, is frightened at what yet remains to be executed.

These faults do not produce less evils in religion. The believer who is resolved to be saved, knows how to rise above these two vices. Humility does not allow him to be dazzled by the illusions of self-love. Zeal and courage excite him to surmount all oppositions. Such was the apostle St Paul.

I. An exposition of the words.

II. The truths and duties which they include.

I. An exposition, &c.—All the expressions of the text allude to the Grecian races. The apostle compares himself to a competitor.

1. Prudent in his activity, he proposes to himself a *mark*, he chooses *means*, he applies himself to making those means subservient to the *end*. The *mark* to which he aspires is *perfection*, consisting in three things: "The knowledge of Jesus Christ;" the righteousness we have through the faith of Christ; the consummation of his sufferings for Jesus Christ. The *means* which he chooses—he imitates those who competed for the prize in the race: "He forgets those things," &c., and "reaches forth," &c. He sacrificed advantages of Judaism—temporal advantages—and even leaves behind the progress he had hitherto made in the gospel. He presses forward to the *duties* and the *rewards* of the gospel. He applies himself to this important affair *only*: "One thing I do."

2. The principle which inspires his activity.—He is assured he shall carry away the prize "of the high calling of God." *Since God calls to the prize*—(1.) We cannot excuse ourselves from aspiring after it. (2.) We may promise ourselves his aid. (3.) Salvation is assured to all those who go on unto perfection. (4.) It must possess infinite value. It is "in Jesus Christ." He merited this prize—manifested it—shows us the way—guides and supports us—draws us—Is our forerunner, and he will bestow the prize.

II. The truths and duties, &c.

1. The saints who live yet upon the earth, however they

may be regenerated by grace, whatever progress they have made, *have not yet attained perfection.*

2. Many motives engage us to imitate this apostle, and to advance both in the knowledge of saving truth and the practice of Christian virtue.—We cannot dispense with the augmentation of our knowledge. Intrinsic excellence of gospel truth. Necessity of being armed against error and seduction. With the growth of knowledge, we require growth of grace. A Christian always remaining in the same state, must be in doubt respecting his salvation. Want of growth is a sign of formality.
3. The care of advancing in godliness ought to be our principal business. It demands greater efforts than any other work, on account of our natural corruptions, the malignity of our enemies—the shortness of our lives. What means should we not employ? Ardent and repeated prayers—attentive reading of Word of God—singing Divine praises—frequenting holy assemblies—approaching sacraments—flying worldly companions—choosing pious friends, holy conversation, retirement, fasting and self-examination. What objects have we not incessantly presented to the eyes of our faith to animate our courage?

GABRIEL DUMONT, 1690.

A HEAVENLY CONVERSATION.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 20.—“For our conversation is in heaven.”

Conversation—*πολιτευμα*—*vita civilis*—citizenship.

I. That the saints are citizens of heaven.

1. Their names are all enrolled in heaven.
2. Christ, their Head, has taken possession of heaven in their names.
3. When they believe, they take up their freedom.
4. They have right to the treasury and riches of heaven.
5. Their heavenly happiness is already confirmed to them.

6. They have the privilege of free trade with heaven.
7. They have the protection of heaven.

II. Their behaviour and conversation is heavenly.

1. The aim and scope of their hearts is heavenward.
2. They are actuated by heavenly principles.
3. They have communion with the God of heaven.
4. They live according to the laws of heaven.
5. Their thoughts and hearts are set upon heaven.
6. Their converse and delight is heavenly.
7. They are heavenly in earthly employments.

A heavenly conversation is convincing, growing, glorifies God, dignifies the saints, makes sufferings easy, brings much joy, gives abundant entrance into glory. To attain it, keep conscience clear, seek opportunities for heavenly exercises, be not formal in holy duties, exercise the grace of faith.

JEREMIAH BURROUGHS, 1648.

CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 11.—“For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

I. Explain this disposition of mind.

1. It implies that our desires of worldly good are low and moderate.
2. That in all our views of bettering our worldly condition we indulge not immoderate cares.
3. That we cheerfully submit to the providence of God in our present condition.
4. That we do not envy others in more prosperous circumstances.
5. That we use no unlawful means to better our condition.
6. That we make the best of our condition whatever it may be.

II. How such a frame is to be learned.

1. Christianity presents the strongest motives to contentment.—The perfections of God. The relations in which we stand to him. The fulness and extent of the Divine promises. The mercies actually received. The shortness of life here. The eternal world awaiting us. The folly and mischief of discontent.
2. Christianity furnishes us with the brightest patterns of contentment.
3. It directs us to the most successful teacher of contentment.

III. Improvement.

1. The present is a state of discipline and learning.
2. More depends upon state of mind than outward circumstances in order to contentment.
3. Let us labour for such a disposition as will be content and tolerably easy in any state of life.

DR JOHN EVANS, 1723.

THE SAINTS IN LIGHT.

COLOSSIANS i. 12.—“The saints in light.”

The saints may be considered in a double capacity:

1. As the sincere members of the church militant on earth.
2. As glorified members of the church triumphant.

The light in which the saints militant dwell is the gospel. The light of the church triumphant is a term of infinite comprehension, and includes all the good, all the joy, and all the perfection of heaven; for, 1. Sight is the most delicate and pleasurable of the senses. 2. Light is used in Scripture for dominion. 3. By light we may understand liberty. 4. Light and darkness are often used for life and death. 5. The felicities of heaven are called “light,” because they chiefly consist in vision and knowledge.

Consider I. What it is the saints shall know.

1. They will have a clearer apprehension of truths which are the subject of gospel revelation.
2. They will know themselves. (1.) Their own excellences. (2.) Their own happiness.
3. They will know each other.
4. They will know God—His character, his will, his providences, his judgments.

II. The manner of their knowledge.

1. Immediately, *i. e.* without means (Rev. xxi. 22.)
2. Impartially.
3. Without error.
4. Without hesitation or doubt.

Inferences.

1. Let this glory be uppermost in your thoughts.
2. Let us not distract ourselves with vain speculations.
3. Let us cheerfully submit to providences of God, though we cannot solve them.

W. W., 1681.

BELIEVERS RISEN WITH CHRIST.

COLOSSIANS iii. 1.—“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”

- I. Here is a fact admitted: The resurrection of Christ.
 - II. A privilege supposed: That the believer is risen with Christ.
 - III. A duty enjoined: “Seek those things which are above.”
- I. The fact admitted.—That he was really dead is an unquestionable fact. The soldier's spear pierced his heart. His body was taken down from the cross, embalmed, buried. What became of it? By the overruling providence of God, many circumstances

transpired to render the resurrection of Christ obvious and undeniable. Then the reproach of the cross is rolled away. His Divine mission is clearly evinced. The perfection of his sufferings is established. He has accomplished salvation for all who believe. There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Death has ceased to be the king of terrors. The grave has become the avenue of life and immortality.

II. The privilege supposed.

1. Christians are risen with Christ professedly.
2. Representatively.
3. Spiritually.
4. By anticipation.

III. The duty enjoined.—These things are described not by their nature but by their residence; the one involves the other. Things above are *absolutely necessary*—they are *attainable*—they must be sought *diligently, consistently, with earnestness*. This seeking must be *supreme and immediate, intensely, obediently, perseveringly*.

W. JAY.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN.

COLOSSIANS iii. 3.—“Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

I. That the life of a Christian is a hidden life.

II. That it is “hid with Christ in God.”

I. That the life of a Christian, &c.

1. What is this life? Not the animal life, but the spiritual or eternal life—the life of faith, holiness, and peace.
2. In what respects it is hidden? (1.) The acts and exer-

cises of it are secret. (2.) Its springs and principles are hidden from the world. 1st Caution, Though hidden from the world, it should not be unknown to Christians themselves. 2nd Caution, The world ought to see its blessed effects.

Inferences:—1. Do not rest satisfied with externals in religion.

2. The life of a saint is matter of wonder to the world.

3. This is why Christians have not their passions so much engaged in the things of this life as others.

4. How vain for a Christian to affect popularity!

5. How difficult for those exalted in life to maintain lively Christianity.

6. The wisdom of God in adapting ordinances of gospel to the Christian life.

Since the eternal life of a Christian is so much a secret, how necessary it is for a Christian to maintain his acquaintance with the unseen world by faith! How little is death to be dreaded by a believer! How glorious the difference between the present and future life of a believer!

II. That it is hid with Christ in God.

1. It is hidden in God.—In the all-sufficiency of the Divine nature—in the purposes of the Divine will—in the covenant of redemption.

2. It is hidden with Christ. (1.) He is the great treasurer of all Divine benefits. (2.) He is the possessor of life in our name. (3.) He dwells in heaven.

Inferences:—Instruction 1. What a glorious person is the poorest Christian!

2. See how it is that Christians accomplish such wonders.

3. See whither a dead sinner must go for spiritual life.

4. See how it is Christians so much desire heaven.

Consolation:—1. Our life is in safe hands. 2. God and Christ know all our spiritual life. 3. Death and judgment, the most terrible thing to a sinner, are become the greatest blessings to a saint.

DR WATTS.

DOING ALL IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.

COLOSSIANS iii. 17.—“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by *him*.”

I. What it is to do all in the name of Christ?

II. Why we must do all in that name?

III. How shall we come to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus?

IV. Some uses.

I. What it is, &c.

1. It is to go to him as a Mediator, or to go to God by him.
2. It is to do all by his authority, power, and command.
3. It is to do all in his strength.
4. For his glory.
5. To live a life of faith.
6. To follow his example.

II. Why we must, &c.

1. Because all we have, are, or can do, is of Christ.
2. Because the Father has exalted him to this.
3. We cannot be accepted but by him.
4. All that comes from God is through him.

III. How shall we come, &c.

1. We must be supposed to be in Christ first.
2. We must have constant recourse to him for supplies of grace.
3. We must live in close and secret communion with him.
4. We must exercise our thoughts much upon him.

IV. Some uses.

1. It is not in our power to act as we please.
2. We cannot expect God's blessing upon anything done without Christ.
3. We must give Christ all the glory.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS FOLLOWERS.

2 THESSALONIANS i. 12.—“That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” His highest honour is to honour Christ; nothing short of this fulfils man's spiritual and immortal destiny. This affecting truth bursts upon us from every utterance of the Divine oracle, from the progressive developments of Divine providence, and from the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

- I. Christ is glorious in the character of his followers, in that they give him the throne, and cheerfully acknowledge his authority over them.
- II. Whatever is excellent in their character is but the reflection of his own.
- III. They are his witnesses in this ungodly world.
- IV. They love to promote His glory and advance the interests of his kingdom.
- V. This is full of comfort to the people of God, because they have the greatest security in his guardianship and love.
- VI. It is full of inducements to holy being.
- VII. It is full of rebuke to ungodly men, that there are no indications of the Saviour's glory in their characters.

DR GARDINER SPRING.

A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

1 TIMOTHY i. 5.—“A good conscience.”

The apostle Paul tells us that, apart from revelation,

the invisible things of God are clearly discernible from the things that are made. "Not only are the works of creation evidences of his existence; but upon that creation he has left the marks and impress of his attributes. His power may be inferred from the extent and grandeur of his works; his wisdom, from their admirable harmony and arrangement; and his beneficence, from the vast proportion of good which he has everywhere dispensed to his creatures. But where, apart from his Word, shall we look for the footsteps and demonstration of his holiness? We can find it nowhere but in ourselves. When we find a tribunal in the secret chamber of our own souls, the seat of self-inspection and of self-judgment, at which the mind passes sentence upon the morality or immorality of its own actions, and instantly, though often unwillingly, approves or condemns; only then do we learn the holiness of God. His *natural* perfections may be seen anywhere and everywhere, his moral glory is nowhere inscribed but on the nature of man. The power of conscience is universally felt. How tremendous will be its testimony in the great day of God, and before the tribunal of Christ!" Oh for a good conscience to meet the terrors of that day without apprehension! But to have it then, my brethren, we must possess it now.

I. What is a good conscience?

II. Its importance and necessity.

I. What is a good conscience?

1. Conscience must be enlightened.—In itself it is not an infallible guide. Its province is not to teach truth, not to correct erroneous principles; but simply to show a man when his conduct is or is not at variance with his convictions of what is right.
2. Conscience, when it has been enlightened, requires to be appeased. A conscience that is only enlightened is a torment, an accuser—the greatest enemy to the soul's

peace—a fire in the veins, the bones, the marrow—a worm that gnaws with insatiable cruelty—Cain, Herod, Belshazzar.

3. Conscience is “good” only when appeased in a way of sanctification. [Distinguish between a conscience void of offence toward God, and a conscience void of offence toward men.]

II. Point out the importance and necessity of a good conscience.

1. This judge is enthroned in you by God himself, and cannot be cast down.
2. How great and solid is the peace which a good conscience is capable of conveying to the soul.
3. Consider what strength and spirit a good conscience imparts through all the journey of life.
4. Consider that subjection to the dictates and decisions of conscience anticipates and prevents an adverse verdict in the great day.

Application.

Be anxiously vigilant against all evil, and watchful as to all opportunities of good. Remember, believer, that your sins are, in some points of view, worse than those of all other men. Let it be your constant concern to live and act as under the eye of your great Master. Be diligent and habitual in the work of self-examination. Let the unconverted receive this last direction—conviction of sin springs from consideration.

D. KATTERNS.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE SALVATION PROCURED BY JESUS CHRIST.

1 TIMOTHY i. 15.—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

. St Paul here affirms three things concerning the

appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world. 1. He declares why he came: "To save sinners." 2. He asserts that "this is a faithful saying," and we have no room to doubt it. 3. He affirms that this is a truth "worthy of all acceptation." By the first of these propositions he indicates the principal design of the Saviour's coming. By the second, he establishes the truth of this salvation. By the third, he exalts its grandeur and importance. To enter into all the apostle's views of this grand truth, we must—

I. Determine the meaning of the proposition,
"Christ Jesus came to save sinners."

II. Prove that this is an indubitable fact.

III. Show that this is an important truth, and
worthy of our highest love and admiration.

I. Determine the meaning, &c.

It points out the meritorious, efficient cause of our salvation. To save sinners he instructs and enlightens them—he corrects and sanctifies them—he gives promises of pardon and grace—he satisfies the demand of Divine justice for them.

II. Prove, &c.

1. Its certainty established by the unanimous testimony of sacred writers.
2. It harmonizes with the natural consciousness men have of their need.
3. It is verified by the antiquity of the doctrine, and the union of Christians on this important article of faith.

III. Show that this, &c.—Consider,

1. The character of that salvation Jesus brings.
2. The means by which it has been obtained.
3. The vindication it affords of the Divine attributes.
4. The great interest we have in its reception.
5. The efficacy it has in the reformation of character and conduct of life.

HENRI CHATELAIN.

THE MEDIATOR.

1 TIMOTHY ii. 5.—“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

- I. Consider the work of Christ as a mediator.—1. It was to make peace. 2. To give satisfaction to Divine justice. 3. To give satisfaction by magnifying the law—by obeying its precepts, and enduring its penalties. 4. To make intercession for his people. 5. To turn his people from their iniquities.

Inferences:—1. There is the greatest occasion for us to bewail our apostacy from God.

2. This work of mediation could never be accomplished by a mere creature.

3. There is the highest reason to admire the kindness and love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- II. Evince the singular fitness of the Saviour for this work.

1. As it results from the constitution of his person.—His humanity—the peculiar manner in which he assumed it. His divine nature—this secured the high perfection of his obedience; this devolved upon his obedience that glory which made it sufficient. The conjunction of the two natures laid the foundation for a communication of properties; secured the Mediator's deliverance from his abasement; secured his entrance into glory; gave fitness to receive and exercise all power in heaven and earth; secured the successful management of his intercession.

2. As it results from the peculiar relation he stands in both to God and his people.—By his relation to God—order was preserved in the operations of the Sacred Three; it insured the Father's confidence in him; it gave singular advantage for the display of the Divine holiness. His relation to his people—became a just ground for the imputation of their sins unto him, and a foundation for the imputation of his righteousness unto them.

III. Inferences.

1. This Mediator was successful in his undertaking.
2. Christ is the only Mediator between God and man.
3. The kindness and wisdom of God is greatly to be admired in this appointment.
4. The greatness of the condescension and love of Christ.
5. Under the sorest distress for sin there is room for hope.

THOMAS HALL, 1728.

THE NATURE AND ADVANTAGES OF TRUE GODLINESS.

1 TIMOTHY iv. 8.—“But godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

I. In what does this godliness consist.

II. Examine the privileges attached to true godliness.

I. In what, &c.

1. Distinguish it from hypocrisy.
2. From superstition.
3. From fanaticism.
4. From false zeal.

It may be known by five inseparable characteristics:—

1. It must be intelligent.
2. Sincere.
3. Loving.
4. Universal.
5. Persevering.

II. The privileges, &c.

1. It is profitable for our souls.
 2. It is beneficial to society.
 3. It is profitable to families.
 4. It is beneficial to the great.
 5. It is advantageous to the rich.
 6. In a word, it is profitable to all kinds of persons, of whatever condition they may be in the world.
- (1.) It has the promise of *this life*—it is the only source

of true happiness and solid pleasure now—And (2.) Better promises in the life to come.

HENRI CHATELAIN.

PERILOUS TIMES.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 1.—“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”

These words contain a warning of imminent dangers; and there are four things in them: 1. The manner of the warning: “This know also.” It belongs to ministers of the gospel to foresee the dangers into which the church is falling. 2. The evil itself: “Perilous times;” times of great difficulty. 3. The manner of their introduction: “Shall come.” Nothing shall keep them out. 4. The time and season: “In the last days;” the days of the gospel—the approaching end of all things.

Observation.—When churches have been continued for a while in their profession, and begun to fall under decays therein, perilous seasons shall overtake them, which it will be hard for them to escape.

I. A season is perilous, when the outward profession of religion is maintained under a visible prevalence of lusts and wickedness.

It is perilous: 1. Because of the infection. 2. Because of ruin and confusion. 3. Because of Divine judgments.

Consider what is our duty in such a season.—1. To mourn for public abominations. 2. To beware of the contagion. In such a season we are apt to have light thoughts of great sins—to countenance ourselves in lesser evils. Converse with the world is full of peril.

II. A season is perilous when men are prone to forsake the truth, and seducers abound.

1. When men grow weary of sound doctrine (2 Tim. iv. 3.)

2. When they have lost the power of the truth in their conversation. 3. It is perilous, because an evidence of withdrawalment of the Holy Spirit.

Our duty in such a season :—1. Not to be content with what we judge to be a sincere profession, but labour to be found in the exercise of graces that respect the truth. (1.) Love. (2.) Experience of power of the truth. (3.) Zeal. 2. Cleave unto the means that God has appointed for preservation in the truth. 3. Remember the faith of predecessors.

III. A season is perilous when professors mix with the world. Such things are directly contrary to design of Christ's mediation.

IV. A season is perilous when there is a great attendance on outward duties, but inward spiritual decays.

V. Times of persecution are perilous times.

Use 1. Let us all endeavour to have our hearts affected with the perils of our own day.

2. Labour to be sensible of the sins and misery of perilous times.

3. Cultivate a mourning spirit over perilous times.

4. Keep up church watch, with diligence.

5. Reckon that all will not escape.

6. Take the comfort of that great rule—"Nevertheless the foundation of God," &c.

DR OWEN, 1676.

FAITH'S FIGHT CROWNED.

2 TIMOTHY iv. 7, 8.—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

I. St Paul's courage.

II. St Paul's constancy.

III. St Paul's crown.

I. St Paul's courage: "I have fought a good fight."

1. A Christian's life is military.—In respect of hardship; watchfulness; combat. He must get his armour ready—the *helmet of hope, the breastplate of love*. He must get his weapons ready—the *shield of faith, the sword of the spirit*. He has a threefold regiment to resist—the *lusts of the flesh, Satan, the world*.
 2. The conflict is a good fight.—A lawful war, a good captain. The enemy is partly beaten; fighting is the best way for peace.
- We must fight in the strength of Christ, and upon our knees by prayer.

II. St Paul's constancy: "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."—I have finished my course, that is, I have run out nature's lease. Christians should hold on till they come to the finishing of their faith. In order to this, let us be well-grounded in the fundamentals of religion; let us preserve a jealous fear of ourselves; let us labour to taste the sweetness of religion; sincerity must run through all our duties.

III. St Paul's crown: "Henceforth," &c.—A crown of glory—a crown of life—a crown of righteousness. It is more refined than earthly crowns; it is given to *every* saint; it does not attract envy; it is everlasting. The substance of this crown is the beatific vision of the all-glorious God—its possession is deferred, for we are under age, we have not finished the faith.

- Use 1. There is nothing lost by solid piety. 2. What contrary ways the godly and wicked go at death. 3. The folly of those that sacrifice this crown for vain pleasures and profits. 4. You who are heirs of glory, labour with all your might for God. 5. Let this crown be an antidote against the fear of death.

THOMAS WATSON, 1678.

GOD'S GOODNESS IN THE GREATEST DISTRESSES.

2 TIMOTHY iv. 17, 18.—“Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

I. Paul's experience of God's loving care of him in his past deliverances.

1. The enemies of the truth are oft for power, always for malice—lions.
2. God suffers his dearest children to fall into the mouths of lions.
3. In their extremities God delivers them.

God suffers his people to be thus afflicted:—1. Because we are so desperately addicted to present things, and prone to put confidence in the arm of flesh. 2. To discover the secrets of our hearts. 3. That false professors may be detected.

God delivers his people:—1. By suspending the malice of their foes. 2. By raising up one lion against another. 3. By diverting them from their intended prey. 4. By changing their nature to lambs. 5. By showing himself a lion. 6. By making them lions to themselves. 7. By making them friends, putting some conceit or fancy into their hearts. 8. By making his own people lions to their adversaries.

II. His assured hope, built upon his experience.

1. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work.—The author of the saint's deliverance is “the Lord.” The deliverance itself,—“from every evil work.” We ought to reason with God from former experiences—we should therefore register his favours. (1.) God preserves from evil works by planting the graces of faith and fear in us—by making us better—a true Christian is as careful

to avoid sins to come as to be freed from the guilt of sins past.

2. "He will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." By himself and by inferior agencies. This kingdom is the freest—the most glorious—the most abundant in supplies—it is heavenly—everlasting. There is a special ground to God's children of perseverance in well-doing. How complete are God's favours! In times of danger look to the heavenly kingdom. The heirs of this kingdom are poor in spirit—believers—they have spirit of adoption.

III. The issue of both his experience and his hopes: As they flow from God's grace, so he ascribes to him the glory. The thought of past deliverances and future deliverances will lead to praise; seriously meditate on God's mercies; think of their nature, positive, privative, temporal, spiritual; think of their greatness; labour for humble spirits; seek assurance of salvation; consider God's gracious promise, "Those that honour me, I will honour." We honour ourselves when we honour God; our praising God causes others to do so.

R. SIBBES, D.D., 1634.

SOBER-MINDEDNESS.

TITUS ii. 6.—"Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded."

Paul the aged is here directing Titus, a young minister, whom he calls his own son in the common faith, what subjects to preach upon; in the choice of which ministers have need of wisdom, should pray for wisdom, and take direction from this and other Scripture directories.

- I. What it is we press upon you when we exhort you to be sober-minded.

1. You must be considerate and thoughtful, not rash and heedless.—Take time to think ; learn to think freely—to think for yourselves, of yourselves. Consider before you act.
2. You must be cautious and prudent, not wilful and heady.—Fix rules of wisdom. Use reason and conscience. Be diffident of your own judgments. Study the Scriptures.
3. You must be humble and modest, not proud and conceited.—Keep low thoughts of self, a quick and constant sense of your manifold defects. Be not above your business, above reproof, above religion.
4. You must be temperate and self-denying, not indulgent of your appetites. Dread the sin of drunkenness. Take heed of its beginnings. Be not desirous of dainties.
5. You must be mild and gentle, not indulgent of your passions.—Learn to bridle anger. If it get dominion in youth it will keep it, and sour the temper or embitter the spirits.
6. You must be chaste and reserved, not wanton or impure.
7. You must be staid and composed, not giddy and unsettled.
8. You must be content and easy, not ambitious and aspiring.
9. You must be grave and serious, not vain and frothy.

II. Consideration to enforce this exhortation.

1. You are reasonable creatures. 2. You are sinners before God. 3. You are setting out in a world of sorrows and snares. 4. Multitudes of the young are ruined for want of this sobriety of mind. 5. You are here upon trial for heaven. 6. You must shortly go to judgment.

III. Application.

1. Examine yourselves. 2. Exhort one another. 3. Contemplate the advantages of sober-mindedness. You will escape vanity of childhood and youth—Recommend yourselves to the favour of God and all wise men—Prepare for a useful and comfortable life, and a happy death. 4. Directions to make you sober-minded. Espouse sober principles. Meditate on serious things. Choose sober companions. Read sober books. Abound in sober work.

THE SINNER'S SUBSTITUTE.

PHILEMON, ver. 18.—“If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.”

This epistle is the only one from the hand of Paul addressed to an individual, that appears in the inspired pages. Though short, and of a private character, it is a bright and beautiful gem in the treasures of God's word. Philemon, to whom it was addressed, was a native of Colosse, and a convert under the ministry of Paul. His servant, or slave, Onesimus, had fled to Rome, and there he also had become a Christian, through the instructions of this apostle. One of the first lessons he would receive from his spiritual instructor, would be the necessity of repairing, as far as possible, the injury he had caused to his master; one of the best proofs of his sincerity would be willingness to retrace his steps. The letter of Pliny upon a kindred topic is far inferior to this of Paul, in which the laws of Christian kindness are so distinctly laid down, that we feel the apostle was writing for all men and all ages.

I. The generous conduct of the apostle.

II. An interesting parallel to this example.

III. Practical remarks.

I. The generous, &c.—It was no easy task to persuade Philemon to receive as a brother beloved him who had forsaken his house a disreputable and unprofitable dependent. The arguments used are presented in a most gentle and persuasive style. The course which he adopted beautifully illustrates the apostle's character—intense love for all his converts; high sense of integrity. He would gladly have retained the fugitive, but the claims of his master were impera-

tive. The terms upon which he pleads are amiable, not despotic; and the self-sacrifice he manifests, surprising, "Put that on mine account." This event, untoward in its commencement, promotes the furtherance of the gospel, for the penitent became the bearer, not only of this domestic epistle, but of that also which was addressed to the church at Colosse.

II. An interesting parallel.—Such generosity is rare, not unexampled, not unsurpassed. This is the language of Jesus on behalf of all repenting sinners, "If he hath wronged," &c. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." We have wronged God, neglected his righteous claims upon our hearts and lives, violated his supreme commands, deserted his service, treacherously revolted to Satan. We are debtors, we owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay, and Jesus sends us to the Divine Father with this inscription, written with his blood, "Put that on mine account." In Gethsemane and Calvary, "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This suretyship is so comprehensive, that it extends to all believers, and to every one of their sins. No longer slaves, they become brethren beloved—they are received for ever.

III. Practical remarks.

1. How abundant the comfort against sin provided for believers in Christ.—We cannot exaggerate it—we cannot trust too confidently here.
2. How much it concerns every soul to be a partaker of Christ's mercy.—If Onesimus had cast this letter into the sea, it would have been ungrateful and dangerous policy—not worse than theirs who reject the offers of grace.

3. How binding the example of Paul, and the greater example of Christ, upon the church, to welcome penitents of every class.

EDITOR.

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SAVIOUR NECESSARY.

HEBREWS ii. 10.—“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

- I. Behold the characters of the Supreme Being: “For whom are all things, and by whom are all things.”
- II. Observe the end which the God of all grace keeps in view: It is “to bring many sons unto glory.”
- III. The means by which he executes his design: He constitutes Jesus Christ “the Captain of their salvation.”
- IV. The manner in which he obtains his distinction, and is prepared for the discharge of his office: He is “made perfect through sufferings.”
- V. The reasonableness and expediency of such a dispensation: “It became him.”
 1. This reasonableness is evident from the necessity of experience in our guide.
 2. The influence of his example.
 3. The demonstration which his sufferings give of the Divine benevolence.
 4. They display the glory of God as the moral ruler of the universe.

Reflections.—Let not Christians think it strange if they should be called to suffer. Ministers cannot dwell too much upon the sufferings of Christ in their preaching.

W. JAY.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

HEBREWS iii. 13.—“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

I. Endeavour to open the chief branches of the deceitfulness of sin.

II. Consider the duty founded thereupon.

III. Practical improvement.

I. The deceitfulness of sin.

1. This appears from its disguising itself, and wholly concealing its nature. The principle must be false which tends to set men at ease in their crimes. It never appears in its own proper dress. Sins take the name and garb of virtues. It not only assumes a decent appearance, but at times puts on the aspect of piety itself. What a conviction of the deceitfulness of sin should we get from the fact that the greatest sin ever committed on earth (the crucifixion) was considered by the guilty as a duty.
2. The deceitfulness of sin appears from the excuses and extenuations it forms for itself.—(1.) Its commonness. (2.) Comparatively small. (3.) Self-righteous propensity to make a merit of some acts, and plead them in extenuation of others. (4.) An endeavour to excuse guilt as the necessary effect of original sin. (5.) Some blasphemous enough to excuse their sins as the effects of God's irresistible will. How various, involved, deep-laid are the excuses of sin. How insufficient and criminal.
3. The deceitfulness of sin appears in its insinuating nature.—(1.) Men initiate themselves in vicious practices by smaller sins. (2.) Follow the sinner in his unhappy course. Custom in sin. (3.) Open sins throw a man into the hands of ungodly companions. (4.) The strength of habits. (5.) Loss of shame. (6.) Hardened conscience. (7.) Boasting of wickedness.

(8.) Seduction of others. (9.) Judicial hardness of heart.

II. The duty founded upon this character of sin : "Exhort one another daily," &c.

1. The persons upon whom it devolves—Christians in general, ministers, magistrates, parents, masters of families.
2. The season: "Daily," &c. It is to be done frequently, without delay.
3. The manner in which it must be done.—(1.) Not upon bare suspicion. (2.) Not when the offender is ill-disposed to receive it. (3.) Not when the sinner is so hardened that reproof would exasperate. (4.) When administered, in love, with meekness, zealously, keeping in view the root of the matter, a polluted nature, with particular care and self-circumspection.

III. Improvement.

1. Learn the great corruption and depravity of our nature.
2. Frequently practise self-examination.
3. Let all, especially the young, beware of the beginnings of sin.
4. Let all seek the cleansing grace and pardoning mercy of Christ.

DR J. WITHERSPOON, 1768.

HOLDING FAST A CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

HEBREWS iv. 14.—"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

That the practice of many who call themselves Christians, wofully belies their profession, is a truth as affecting as it is evident. As it was in the apostles' days, so it is in our own. "Many walk," of whom it

must be said with the deepest regret, that "they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Hence the cause of Christianity suffers as much, if not more, by the treachery of false and hollow friends, as by the open malice of avowed enemies.

I. Illustrate the nature of the Christian profession.

II. Consider what may be implied in *holding fast* that profession.

III. The motives to this duty suggested in the text.

I. The nature of the Christian profession.

1. A cordial assent to the whole of Scripture truth, and especially the testimony which God has given of his Son Christ Jesus.

2. A profession of practical conformity to the whole of God's revealed will.

3. The hope of eternal life and glory in heaven.

II. What is implied in holding fast our profession?

1. That we actually have this profession.

2. A just sense of its high value.

3. That we may be tempted to forsake it.

4. That we are called to the regular, uniform, constant exercise of it.

5. Perseverance to the end.

III. The motives to this duty.

1. The person and character of him who is its object.

2. Christ's office, and relation to us.

3. The security afforded against our own weakness, and the malice of spiritual foes.

DR HENRY HUNTER.

THE THRONE OF GRACE.

HEBREWS iv. 16.—"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

This epistle is indited and left to the church by the

Holy Ghost, to shew particularly, and more distinctly, the high priesthood of Jesus Christ, and the excellent benefits that his people have thereby, &c.

I. God has more thrones than one. He has a throne in heaven, a throne on earth, a throne of judgment, a throne of grace.

II. The godly can distinguish one throne from another. About this throne there is a rainbow, a token of the covenant. The high priest is continually ministering before it. The sacrifice is presented there. Streams of grace constantly proceed thence. There are numberless worshippers.

III. The persons intended by this exhortation. They are described in this epistle as "Such as give the most earnest heed to the word"—such as have seen "Jesus crowned with glory and honour"—"the seed of Abraham"—"Children"—"Christ's brethren."

IV. How we are to approach the throne of grace.

1. By the second veil—the body and blood of Christ.
2. Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.
3. Our bodies washed with pure water.
4. Boldly.

V. Motives for coming boldly to the throne of grace.

1. Because we have such a High Priest.
2. Because of our need. Times of need are young days; time of spiritual prosperity; time of worldly trouble; day of persecution; time of entering on new relations; when religion decays around us; time of contracted guilt; time of reproach; time of desertion on the part of human friends; day of death.

Continual supplies of grace are essential to our welfare.

JOHN BUNYAN, 1685.

CHRIST'S HEART IN HEAVEN TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE ON EARTH.

HEBREWS v. 2.—“Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”

I. The qualifications of a high priest under the ceremonial law.

II. The accommodation of the passage to Christ.

III. The account here given of the heart of Christ in heaven, towards his people on earth.

I. The qualification, &c.—The office supposes sin, and was appointed on account of it. Under the patriarchal dispensation, hereby a standing memorial was kept up of man's guilt, pollution, demerit; and of Christ, the immaculate Lamb, who was to take away sin. Under the economy of Moses, &c., the priest was chosen from among men, a man in himself, and of himself guilty, sinful, and unclean. He was experimentally to consider this, that he might exercise himself in the discharge of his office in a tender, merciful, and compassionate manner. His intercession, his benediction pronounced with the same love, let their cases be what they would.

II. The accommodation, &c.—If frail men were to be qualified with this peculiar disposition to fit them for their office, surely the antetypical Aaron infinitely transcends them in these qualifications! The person of Christ is wonderful! The love of Christ is infinite! If we would view him as the Christ of God, we must behold him as God-Man. His being a partaker of our nature encourages our approach to him, while his eternal Godhead will give us sufficient

cause, and his immutable Word sufficient warrant to trust in him. View him taking our nature, state, condition, &c. Oh that you could but apprehend this blessed truth, that Jesus Christ is just exactly what you, as poor sinful people, need him to be. You would fain come to Christ, but know not how. When you would pray, it may be you cannot utter your desires at his throne. When you read the Word, it may be you cannot understand it. Jesus, the compassionate Saviour, esteems it his glory to prove to a demonstration that he can have compassion on the ignorant. By such as "are out of the way" are to be understood, those who have willingly and wilfully forsaken the Lord, by willingly and wilfully sinning against him. It pleased God, under the ceremonial dispensation, to ordain and provide a sacrifice for sins of ignorance, and also for wilful sinning; to point out the profession and all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.

III. The blessed account here given, &c.—The people of God being the invariable objects of Christ's love, the travail of his soul, the joy of his heart, his crown and diadem must be remembered by him. As an enthroned, crowned Saviour, in glory everlasting, he is upon his throne, almighty to save, bless, and defend all who trust in him; to express his love to all his called ones to the very uttermost. Are any of you who believe fallen by your iniquity? Jesus saith, "I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely." Are you under present guilt? "His blood cleanseth from all sin." Jesus is a present Saviour. O believers, look off yourselves entirely, and look to Christ continually.

S. E. PIERCE.

CHRIST A COMPLETE SAVIOUR.

HEBREWS vii. 25.—“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

- I. Of the intercession of Christ.—He prays for all the elect, that they may be brought home to God; that sins through infirmity, after conversion, may be pardoned; that graces may be maintained and supplied; that their persons may be preserved.
- II. The benefits of Christ's intercession.—Believers are thereby saved in a way of justification and of preservation. Christ saves to the uttermost; those at the greatest distance—the uttermost man; from the uttermost sin and temptation. In Christ's ability lieth our safety. The justified need an intercessor; they are imperfect in feelings, in graces, in duties.
- III. The persons interested in the intercession of Christ: “Those that come to God by him.” Some come to God, not by Christ; some come to Christ, but not “to God by him.” Men thoroughly awakened come to Christ—backsliders return to God by him—the sincere Christian comes to God by Christ.
- IV. Every sincere comer is certain of salvation.
 1. The durableness of his intercession proves that the covenant is not shaken.
 2. The oath confirming Christ's priesthood establishes salvation.
 3. This priesthood is unchangeable as Christ's life.
 4. The duration of Christ's intercession is grounded on the validity of his merits.
- V. Application.
 1. Study Christ's priesthood.

2. Diligently improve it to self and others.
3. Let it give boldness in coming to God.

JOHN BUNYAN, 1688.

PROVOKING TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS.

HEBREWS x. 24.—“And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works.”

The church of the Lord Jesus has been established for the comfort, happiness, and spiritual growth of all its members, as well as for the furtherance of the gospel in our world. It is compared to a body—the human body—in which a living sympathy pervades every part, and connects it with every other part; it is a brotherhood, in which nearness of relation, community of interest, resemblance of character, and oneness of destiny, produce the strongest affection. It is a confederacy, in which every individual is pledged to guard the interests of all the others, to promote their welfare, study their wants, and develope the law of love to its utmost possible extent. All the precepts addressed to Christian conduct imply the existence of this benevolent disposition, urge to its increase, and warn us against anything injurious thereto as a scandal upon the beauty and unity of the body of Christ. This law of love has no limits; the man who has found the extent of good wishes, and tender thoughts, and kind words, and loving acts, is the dupe of some counterfeit principle, and not the disciple of that charity that never faileth.

I. The apostolic exhortation: “Let us consider one another.”

II. The object contemplated: “To provoke unto love and good works.”

I. The apostolic exhortation.—If one had power to do so, this would be a fine sentiment to make current among the men of the world. If the exchange, the counting-house, the factory, the family, could be brought under the salutary influence of this rule of life, never to act or speak without consideration of the interests of others, what an altered world ours would become! If, in all their avocations, men would recognise the brotherhood of the race, instead of manifesting a reckless disregard of all interests but their own; many a heart-ache would be spared, a happy sanction would be given to every social virtue, and a successful guard to every social vice. But however indisposed the ungodly may be to adopt the maxim, the disciple of Jesus cannot forget the golden rule, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them: for this is the law and the prophets." "Let us consider one another." This exhortation includes—

1. A tender commiseration with each others' sufferings.
2. A grateful admiration of each others' graces.
3. A due allowance for each others' infirmities.
4. A careful abstinence from injuring each other in any way.

II. The object contemplated: "To provoke unto love and good works."—It is possible to promote and stimulate Christian love, not only in our own hearts, but in the hearts of others also. A cup of cold water administered to the labourer in the vineyard—an encouraging smile—a stumbling-block removed—the very slightest service, is not in vain. Good works are so called, not because they are meritorious, but "good and profitable unto men." Their great variety gives scope for every description of character. They are good in their origin—in their object—in their results.

1. We are all very prone to relax our zeal and love in doing good.
2. We are very dependent upon one another in the prosecution of Christian labours.
3. We are anticipating a condition in which all the joys of Christian service shall be experienced without opposition and without decline.

EDITOR.

THE DISCOVERIES OF FAITH.

HEBREWS xi. 1.—“The evidence of things not seen.”

- I. Faith reveals the otherwise invisible God.
- II. It reveals the Lord Jesus Christ to the heart.
- III. It discerns the nature of indwelling grace.
- IV. It discovers the exceeding sinfulness of sin.
- V. As to Satan, the believer knows more of him by the Word than others do.
- VI. Faith gathers instruction from ages that are past.
- VII. It brings to light many unseen present things.
- VIII. It realises future and eternal things.
- IX. It penetrates seeming contradictions.
- X. It extracts good out of evil—strength out of weakness—hope out of despair—joy in sorrow—wisdom in folly—all out of nothing.

EDWARD POLHILL, 1670.

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC.

HEBREWS xi. 17.—“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.”

Take notice of a few particulars, and you will, nay,

MUST admit, that this scene is among the greatest wonders in the history of the world.

1. This command has reference to a *son*, an only son; and what is more, the son of Abraham's old age; and what is still more, for aught that appears, a dutiful, obedient, pious son.

2. This son was the embodiment of a promise and covenant that Abraham held dearer than all earthly good, dearer than his own life.

3. He was commanded to perform this act with his own hand.

4. It was a protracted trial.

5. Observe the cruel nature of the sacrifice—knife—fire.

6. Every circumstance calculated to harrow up the father's feelings.

7. Look at the scandal it would involve upon God, upon religion, upon himself.

I. Glance at the conduct of Abraham under this fearful dispensation.

1. We read of no remonstrances, no expostulations, no questionings, no doubts, no evasions, no appeal by prayers.

2. Observe his promptitude and diligence.

3. See how steadfastly he keeps out of his way everything that would obstruct his purpose.

4. Notice the terms in which he dismisses his attendants.

5. The calmness with which he hears his son's question, "Where is the lamb?"

6. The disclosure of his purpose to Isaac.

II. The design of this transaction, and the instruction it conveys.

1. A shadow of the great redemption.

2. A great example of faith and obedience.

3. The essential connection between faith and works.

4. "When reason fighteth against faith, it is wisdom to quit that reason which would make us quit the promises."—(*Dickson.*)

5. God often reserves delivering mercy till the greatest extremity.

D. KATTERNS.

THE FAITH OF MOSES.

HEBREWS xi. 27.—“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

Consider I. What the Jewish leader did?

II. The motive that inspired his noble courage.

- I. What the Jewish leader did? In order to form just views of the courage of Moses in his exit from Egypt at the head of all his people, we must consider,
 - I. The nature of the commission entrusted to him.
 1. It was odious.
 2. It appeared to human wisdom absurd.
 3. It was perilous.
 4. He had to discharge it in the face of all the pomp and power of earthly majesty.
 - II. The manner in which he accomplished his arduous task.
 1. It was not enough that he should address Pharaoh once.
 2. Everything apparently concurred to defeat his undertaking.
 3. Pharaoh yielded to a certain point.
 4. What the monarch could not accomplish by skill and compliance, he attempted to enforce with threatenings and power.
- II. The motive that inspired his courage.
 1. The faith of Moses represented God to him as more terrible than all earthly sovereigns to the disobedient.
 2. As more capable of rewarding and protecting him than they, if he continued faithful.

Who can doubt that the hope of Divine protection sustained him? that the certainty of Divine recompense animated him.

DE SUPERVILLE LE FILS.

THE DUTY OF IMITATING DEPARTED WORTH.

HEBREWS xiii. 7.—“Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

These words evidently refer to former teachers of the church in Jerusalem, or more generally, of the churches in Judea. The Hebrews would be at no loss to understand the reference, &c. From the manner in which the eighth verse is rendered in our translation, mere English readers are apt to run the seventh and eighth verses together, as if it were meant that *Jesus Christ* had been the *end* of their conversation. The construction in the Greek will not at all admit of it; nor does the word translated “*end*,” ever signify *final cause*, or *object*, but simply *close*, termination, or *issue*. The eighth verse ought to be converted into a distinct proposition: “Jesus Christ (is) the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

I. The exhortation itself: “Whose faith follow.”

1. Holding fast, as they had done, to the end of life, the Word of the Divine testimony.
2. Cleaving, with the same steadfastness of faith, to the Divine promises.
3. Imitating their faith in all its practical effects.

II. The motive by which compliance with the exhortation is recommended: “Considering the end of their conversation.”

1. Contemplating their state in dying.
2. Considering their death as the final close of their earthly service.
3. Contemplating their departure out of this life as the commencement of a better life.

DR. WARDLAW.

KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE.

JAMES iv. 17.—“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not,
to him it is sin.”

The apostle, in the former verses, had met with a sin common in those days, a sinful boasting among men: “Go to, now, ye that say, &c.,” you may be in your graves before to-morrow, “for what is your life? it is even a vapour.” “Well,” might they say, “what need we to be taught so plain a lesson?” “Who knows not all this?” The apostle seems to meet them in the text with an answer, “Do ye know all this?” “Then the greater is your sin that you do it not.” I shall only explain this phrase, “To him it is sin;” that is, it is an heinous sin; it is sin with a witness. He that “knew his Lord’s will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.”

- I. That we ought to know to do good: know our duty.
 - II. That we ought not only to know to do good, but to do it.
 - III. That he that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, is of all others most guilty.
- I. That we ought to know, &c.
 1. Knowledge is our lamp and star to guide us in the truth.
 2. Knowledge is the foundation of all grace.

3. The chief work in conversion consists in knowledge (Romans xii. 2.)
4. Nothing in religion, however excellent, can do us good without knowledge.

II. That we ought not only to know to do good, but to do it.

1. Men know they should abstain from evil.
2. They know they should pursue holiness.

But they do it not:—

1. For want of sound conviction.
2. Because of spiritual sloth.
3. Incredulity.
4. Prejudice.

III. That he that knoweth, &c.

1. He sins after counsels, admonitions, warnings.
2. It is an aggravation to sin against conscience after afflictions.

Application.—Presumptuous sins are desperate—they are accompanied with pride; ungrateful; contemptuous; defiant. They harden the heart—make deep wounds in the soul.

1. Take heed of little sins.
2. Revere the dictates of conscience.
3. Pray to have knowledge sanctified.

THOMAS WATSON, 1657.

THE BEAUTY OF GRACE.

1 PETER i. 2.—“Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”

When we salute our friends we cannot wish them a greater blessing than grace and peace. The way to have peace, is to have grace; one is the root; the other, the flower. First grace, then peace. These two are sisters, but grace is the elder.

- I. What is meant by grace? Sometimes it is taken for the favour of God; sometimes for beauty. In the text, it means that infusion of a new and holy principle in the heart, whereby it is changed, and is made after God's own heart.
- II. The author of it.—The Spirit of God. He works grace universally and progressively in all the faculties of the regenerate soul.
- III. Why is this work of holiness in the heart called grace?—It is above nature. It is the work of God's free grace.
1. Grace has a soul-quickenings excellency.
 2. Grace has a soul-enriching excellency.
 3. Grace has a soul-adorning excellency.
 4. Grace has a soul-cleansing excellency.
 5. Grace has a soul-strengthening excellency.
 6. Grace has a soul-raising excellency.
 7. Grace has a performing excellency.
 8. Grace has a soul-ennobling excellency.
 9. Grace has a soul-securing excellency.
 10. Grace has a heart-establishing excellency.
 11. Grace has a preparatory excellence for glory.
 12. Grace has an abiding excellency.

Let us try whether we have true grace. It is known by antipathy to sin—By its growth. It is willing to suffer for Christ.

Would you obtain it? Go to God for it. Engage the prayers of others. Frequent the means of grace.

THOMAS WATSON.

LOVE TO AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.

- 1 PETER i. 8.—“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

These words contain three things:—

- I. The distinguishing character of real Christians:
They believe on him whom they have not seen.
- II. The genuine effects of true faith: A spiritual
and ardent love to an unseen Saviour.
- III. The happy consequences of such a faith: "They
rejoice," &c.

The second of these is our topic.—Inquire,

- I. What are the principal properties of the Christian's love to an unseen Saviour?
- II. Why the Christian loves an unseen Saviour?
- III. Evince the reasonableness of a Christian's love.
- I. What are the properties, &c.
 - 1. It is sincere and hearty.
 - 2. It is universal.
 - 3. It is superlative.
 - 4. It is constant and everlasting.
- II. Why, &c.
 - 1. Because of his excellences.
 - 2. The relation he sustains to them.
 - 3. The obligations they feel to his free, unmerited love.
- III. Evince the reasonableness, &c.—Consider,
 - 1. The infinite glory of his person.
 - 2. The amazing greatness of his condescension on their behalf.
 - 3. The blessings he has conferred on them.
 - 4. The endearing titles he gives them.
 - 5. The care he bestows upon them.
 - 6. The freeness of all this love.

SAMUEL HAYWARD, 1750.

THE SEARCH AFTER GOSPEL KNOWLEDGE.

- 1 PETER i. 10, 11.—"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should

come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

No employment is more excellent than the search after truth. That excellence is enhanced in proportion to the value and importance of the truth in question. Scientific truth cannot be compared with moral truth, and both of them are surpassed by religious truth—much more by "the truth as it is in Jesus." Here is a striking feature drawn in the context. The central object is the truth, or salvation by the gospel of Christ. Here are all the existing saints, scattered abroad as they were throughout Pontus, Galatia, &c., clustered about it, and in the enjoyment of it. Here is a vast throng of prophets diligently employed in searching after a knowledge of it. Hovering over them innumerable angels, burning with anxiety and interest to penetrate its mysteries. The past and present, the lower and upper world, angels and men, striving to look into this ark, which contains the salvation of a world. How ought this representation to exalt our conceptions of gospel truth!

I. The subject of this inquiry.

II. The persons engaged in it, and the manner in which they prosecuted their search.

III. The impelling cause.

IV. Their success.

I. The subject of this inquiry—salvation: "The grace that should come." Not to dwell upon salvation in general, let us glance at the glorious privileges conferred upon the church under the gospel.

1. The actual exhibition of Christ in the flesh.

2. Perfect freedom from ceremonial bondage.

3. The admission of the Gentiles to be fellow-heirs with the Jews of the grace of life.

4. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and full discovery of his person and offices.
5. The pre-eminent privilege of meanest subject of gospel over greatest saint of old economy.
6. The full and complete discovery of the doctrine of immortality.

II. The persons, &c.

1. They searched and inquired.—The spirit of revelation in them did not supersede use of ordinary means. If they, though prophets, felt this need, how much more we?
2. They did this diligently.—This diligence involves—sparing no pains or labour; daily seeking; turning discoveries to practice; prosecuting the work with affection and earnestness.

III. The impelling cause: “The Spirit of Christ which was in them.”

1. The need of the aid of Holy Spirit in pursuit of knowledge of salvation—without this a man will not care to seek, will not properly understand, will not feel its power.
2. That the Holy Spirit is given us to qualify us for the profitable use of means.

IV. Their success.

They did not, perhaps, attain all they desired, but much was revealed (verse 12.)

ANONYMOUS.

REDEMPTION ADMIRER BY ANGELS.

1 PETER i. 12.—“Which things the angels desire to look into.”

These words are the conclusion of the apostle Peter's account of the gradual unfolding of the mystery of redemption; and they contain a striking and extraordinary sentiment:—That the angels themselves are

filled with a holy curiosity to search into this great design of God. The word translated "look into," properly signifies "to stoop or bend down, and examine with the strictest attention." These pure and exalted spirits not only adore this part of their Creator's will, but they are lost and swallowed up in the contemplation of it. How much more are we, the interested parties, called to adore, and dwell on this mystery of love, on which our salvation from deserved wrath, and possession of infinite felicity to all eternity, is suspended!

I. Mention those circumstances which are probably the subject of adoring inquiry, or perhaps holy astonishment, to the angels of God.

1. The incarnation of the Son of God.
2. The substitution of an innocent person in the room of the guilty.
3. The acceptance of sinners with God through the imputed righteousness of Christ.
4. The application of redemption to individuals.

II. Practical improvement of the subject.

1. What an illustration of their guilt who despise the gospel!
2. Great encouragement to sinners to return to God through Christ.
3. An example of the proper employment of redeemed sinners—humble amazement, highest gratitude.

DR WITHERSPOON, 1768.

LIFE A SOJOURNING.

1 PETER i. 17.—"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

I. Life is a sojourning.—This supposes,

1. An unmeddlingness with worldly concerns.
 2. A light address.
 3. Making account of no other than hard usage.
 4. Having a good mind homeward.
- II. This sojourning hath a limit :—"Time."—Moses reckons it by years ; Job, by months ; Jacob and David, by days. There are but two things which we are charged to redeem—time and truth.
- III. This time must be passed.
- IV. This passage must be in fear ; both of reverence and circumspection.
- V. This fear must respect God as a Father and a Judge.—There are three motives of our calling upon the Father : our duty, our need, our benefit.
- BP. HALL, 1655.
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CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

- 1 PETER ii. 21.—"Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."
- I. Premise some things by way of caution.
 - II. Show in what respects Christ is an example to be followed?
 - III. Some arguments to persuade to the imitation of him.
 - IV. Directions how this duty may be done effectually.
- I. Cautions.
1. Think not to be altogether free from sin as Christ was.
 2. Think not that all his actions are to be imitated.
 3. Think not that your obedience can be meritorious as his was.
 4. You must not imagine that your sufferings are expiatory of sin.
- II. Show in what respects ?

1. In his great self-denial.
2. In patient endurance of the world's hatred.
3. In resisting and overcoming the prince of darkness.
4. In contempt of the world's glory.
5. In his perpetually doing good.
6. In his profitable and edifying communications.
7. In his manner of performing holy duties.
8. In his humility and meekness.
9. In his love to God, and fervent zeal for his glory.
10. In his sufferings and death.

III. Some arguments, &c.—Consider,

1. The greatness of him who gives the example.
2. The relation in which you stand to him.
3. God did fore-ordain believers to a conformity to Christ.
4. This will make it evident that you are indeed in him.
5. It much honours Christ.
6. He requires it of you.

IV. Directions how, &c.

1. Let your unlikeness to Christ be matter of great humiliation.
2. Think how desirable it is to be growing up more and more into him in all things.
3. Being sensible of your own impotency, live by faith on the Son of God.
4. Give yourselves up to the conduct of Christ's own Spirit.

NATHANAEL VINCENT, M.A., 1689.

THE DIFFICULTY OF SALVATION.

1 PETER iv. 18.—“And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

By “righteous” here is meant that evangelical righteousness which we have in the state of the gospel, viz., the righteousness of Christ imputed to us; for Christ himself being ours, his obedience, and all that he hath, is ours also; and whosoever partakes of this righteousness which is by faith, hath also a righteousness of sanc-

tification accompanying the same: "For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

I. The righteous shall scarcely be saved.

II. The terrible end of sinners and the ungodly.

I. The righteous shall scarcely be saved.

1. *He shall be saved.*—Is saved already, (Luke xix. 9; Eph. ii. 6.) The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. All the troubles and enemies of the world shall not hinder his salvation.

2. *He shall scarcely be saved.*—This is not a word of doubt, but of difficulty.

The way of salvation is full of difficulties.

1. It is not easy to get a man out of a state of corruption.

2. Besetting sin makes it difficult.

3. Satan opposes it.

4. The world impedes.

5. Scandal makes it hard to be saved.

6. We offend God and give him just cause to withdraw his Spirit.

God will have it thus to make heaven sweeter to the redeemed, and to detect the hypocrite. If you would make the way easy, 1. Beg the Spirit of Christ. 2. Labour for humility. 3. Love. 4. Hope. 5. Mortify sin.

II. The terrible end, &c.—By sinner we understand the man who makes a trade of sin; lives in the constant practice of it.

Where shall he appear?

1. In the time of public calamity?

2. In the hour of death?

3. In the day of judgment?

DR RICHARD SIBBES, 1630.

THE PRECIOUS PROMISES.

2 PETER i. 4.—"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the

divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

The principle of every believer's life is Christ; and the means of its preservation are the promises; whose virtue and efficacy is such as happily suits itself with the several ages and conditions of believers.

The promises are the milk by which babes in Christ are nourished; the young men's evidences by which they are animated to combat with the wicked one, and assured of being crowned with victory; they are the old men's staff, upon the top of which, like aged Jacob, they may safely lean, and worship God; a staff for power, like Moses' rod, and for flourishing, like Aaron's rod, budding, blossoming, and yielding precious fruit.

I. The fountain from whence they flow.

II. The tenure that believers have in them.

III. Their goodness and worth.

IV. The noble end of their donation.

I. The fountain, &c.—Jesus, (see ver. 2, 3.) To him they were all made; in him they are all fulfilled and accomplished. They flow freely from him. They lead sweetly to him.

II. The tenure, &c.: "They are given unto us." Christ invites us not to buy, but to take.

III. Their goodness and worth: set forth by a double character: "Exceeding great and precious."—Greatness and goodness are then most refulgent when they meet in the same subject, and are joined by natural couples and connections; like the curtains of the tabernacle, that were looped one to another; but such a conjunction, as it is glorious, so it is rare, and seldom found either in *persons* or in *things*; in persons they are so dissociated, as if they were of lineages altogether distinct, and had small or no affinity. Rarely are great men good, or good men

great. And as in persons, so in things, they are not often linked and chained together. *Pebbles* are great, but not precious; *pearls* are precious, but not great; water in the *sea* is *abundant*, but not *pure*; in the brook *pure*, but not *abundant*. But in the promises there is a full and happy concurrence of both, they are made up of things wherein greatness and worth do vie with each other; everlasting life is as sweet as long; heaven is as glorious in its beauty as it is vast in its dimensions; the crown of righteousness is as rich as weighty. There is no one promise of the gospel but is of that extent for its latitude, and of that value for its preciousness, that he deserves to be eternally poor, who, having that for his subsistence, looks upon any man who hath an interest in none, greater or richer than himself, though the gravel of the river were turned into pearls, and every shower of rain from the clouds into a shower of silver and gold, to supply his wants.

IV. The high and noble end of the donation of the promises: "That by these we might," &c. The elevation and dignifying of our nature by Christ.

DR WILLIAM SPURSTOWE, 1654.

CHRISTIAN FORTITUDE.

2 PETER i. 5.—"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue."

Some would understand here *virtue* in a general sense; but this seems unnatural, because all the following particulars are comprehended in the general idea of *virtue*,—temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity. The word *ἀρετή* is often used by Greek writers for *valour*, *courage*—so *virtus* in Latin. What

could be more naturally urged upon us after *faith*, or a belief in the gospel, than courage in its profession? And what could more aptly follow upon this, than that we should add to our *courage*, knowledge, or a growing acquaintance with the doctrines and duties contained in the rule of faith, so that our courage may not be ill placed.

I. Explain the nature of this Christian grace.

1. For what Christian courage is to be exercised: The cause of Christ.
2. Against what it is to be exercised: The power, subtlety, activity of the powers of darkness—oppositions from within ourselves—discouragements and dangers.
3. In what acts and instances it should express itself: In deliberate, vigorous resolutions for God and our duty upon counting the cost; in suppressing fear of evils at a distance; in readiness to undertake hard service; in uniform steadiness of conduct under trials.

II. What may be intended in the exhortation to add courage to our faith?

1. Faith discovers Divine providence, as engaged for us and with us in all our difficulties.
2. Faith proposes the Divine Spirit, as directly provided to help our infirmities.
3. Faith represents our main enemies as already vanquished.
4. Faith assures us that our trials shall not exceed our strength.
5. Faith sets in view greater evils to be feared from cowardice than can be feared from adherence to God.
6. Faith assures us of the certain success of our courage.
7. Faith represents noble examples of holy fortitude.

III. Inferences.

1. Consider fortitude as of utmost importance in the Christian life.
2. Cultivate faith to encourage fortitude.
3. Use all means to fortify mind.

DR JOHN EVANS, 1723.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

2 PETER iii. 18.—“But grow in grace.”

True grace is progressive—of a spreading, growing nature. It is with grace as with the light; first there is the daybreak, then it shines brighter to the full meridian. The saints are compared to the stars for their light, to trees for their growth.

I. How many ways may a Christian be said to “grow in grace?”

1. He grows in the exercise of grace.
2. He grows in the degree of grace; he goes from faith to love, &c.

II. What is the right manner of a Christian's growth?

1. To grow less in one's own eyes.
2. To grow proportionably.
3. To grow in grace adequately.

III. Why must true grace grow?

1. It is the seed of God.
2. Its excellency.
3. Its possessor is engrafted into Christ.

IV. What motives are there to grow in grace?

1. Growth is the end of ordinances.
2. It is best evidence of truth of grace.
3. It is the beauty of a Christian.
4. The more we grow, more glorious to God.
6. The more God will love us.
6. There is still something lacking in us.
7. It will hinder growth of corruption.
8. There is no excessive growth of grace.
7. Such as do not grow, decay.
10. The more we grow in grace, the more we shall flourish in glory.

V. How shall we know whether we grow in grace?

Signs of not growing: 1. Loss of spiritual appetite.

2. Growing more worldly.

3. Less trouble about sin.

Signs of growing: 1. More firmly rooted in religion.

2. More spiritual frame of heart.

3. Growth under opposition.

VI. What shall we do to grow in grace?

1. Take heed of love of sin.

2. Use all means—be humble—pray for growth.

VII. How may we comfort those who complain of want of growth? "There is that maketh himself poor, yet he is rich." Bless God if you grow in sincerity and humility. Growth of the root is true growth.

THOMAS WATSON, 1657.

SELF-DELUSION AS TO OUR STATE BEFORE GOD.

1 JOHN i. 8.—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves."

Among the earliest tokens of the corrupted nature of our first parents was this, "They hid themselves from the Lord God;" but we may be assured that this guilty impulse of concealment had been preceded by another token of guilt no less fatal; and that as, after their crime, they strove to hide from God, so, during and before it, they had too successfully learned to hide from themselves. Sin leads astray by blinding, and blinds by leading astray, (Judges xvi. 21; Eph. iv. 18; 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.) As you would stand clear with God, stand manifest to yourself.

I. The imagination of our own sinlessness is an inward lie.—Were a perfect man to exist, he would be the last to know it; for the highest stage of advancement is the lowest descent in *humility*. Adequately

to enumerate the causes of blindness to our sin would be impossible. Indifference to the inquiry one cause, and this increased by worldly occupation. Particular causes of delusion vary with varieties of individual character. Temptations perpetuate it. Satan and his host are engaged to drug this opiate.

II. Primarily this delusion must be referred to the governing agency of Satan. He is "the ruler of the *darkness* of this world."

1. The first and darkest of his works is the original and inherited corruption of the human soul itself.
2. Nature herself, prone to sin, may be expected to tell us "we have no sin," therefore her evidence is to be received with suspicion.
3. The condition of the world assists this melancholy work of deception.
4. It is augmented by the influence of fashion and of rank.
5. This false security is fortified by our impatience of the pain of self-disapproval.
6. The compassionate endurance of God is wrested into an encouragement to despise the vengeance he delays.

What more appalling to conceive than the unravelling of the subtlest intricacies of the heart's inward hypocrisy, man's shame uncovered to himself, his imaginary innocence exposed to the scoff of the tempter that suggested it, his darling deceits dragged forth and disgraced before his eyes? A search close, and deep, and penetrating as this, is the perpetual intimation of Scripture.

ARCHER BUTLER.

THE ADVOCATE.

1 JOHN ii. 1.—"And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

I. Explain the character of this office.—It consists in,

1. Christ's presenting himself before his Father on our behalf.
2. The signification of his mind and will on our behalf.
3. His presentation of our prayers.

II. The properties of the Saviour as an advocate.

1. He is a common advocate for the whole household of faith.
2. He is as fully qualified as we could wish. (1.) He does not act without a proper commission. (2.) He is very able. (3.) He is acceptable to the Father. (4.) He is holy and sinless. (5.) He is faithful. (6.) He is kind, gracious, affectionate.
3. He is a constant, perpetual advocate.
4. He is a prevalent advocate.

III. Inferences.

1. Let those be convinced of their unhappy state who are not interested in the advocacy of Christ.
2. Let us keep up an affectionate esteem, and be more thankful for this work.
3. How careful we ought to be not to entrench upon or abuse this glorious office.
4. Let us have daily recourse to Christ our advocate.
5. Let this office promote our consolation and joy.
6. Let us study suitable returns to our advocate.

PHILIP GIBBS, 1728.

THE PATTERN OF PURITY.

1 JOHN iii. 3.—“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

- I. The workman.
- II. The work.
- III. The pattern.

DR R. SIBBES, 1629.

FAITH'S VICTORY OVER THE WORLD.

1 JOHN v. 4.—“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

The Christian life is, with great propriety, represented as a state of warfare. We are placed in the world as on a field of battle—dangers thick on every side—thousands continually falling on every side. “We wrestle not against,” &c.

I. What it is in the world the Christian has to overcome?

1. Its allurements.
2. Its terrors.

II. How the Christian's faith enables him to obtain the victory? It overcomes the allurements of the world:

1. By showing him the vanity and unsatisfying nature of all earthly enjoyments.
2. By pointing out dangerous consequences of unlawful pursuits of worldly men.
3. By filling his soul with pure and spiritual delights.

It enables him to overcome the terrors of the world:—

1. By the gracious supports it yields under every trial.
2. By presenting the example of the great Author and Finisher of faith.
3. By the glorious hopes with which it inspires him.

III. Practical uses of the subject.

1. Is our faith genuine? Does it overcome the world?
2. The danger of worldly prosperity.
3. The benefit of sanctified afflictions.

DAVID BLACK.

THE INWARD WITNESS TO CHRISTIANITY.

1 JOHN v. 10.—“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”

I. What believing on the Son of God means.

II. What this inward witness is that faith gives to Christianity.

III. What sort of witness it is, and how it exceeds other testimonies.

IV. Some inferences.

I. What believing, &c.

1. A believing Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world.
2. A trust in Jesus as our Saviour.

II. What this inward witness, &c., (verses 11, 12.)
Eternal life, which consists in *happiness* and *holiness*.

1. Happiness.—(a) In the pardon of sin ; whence arises peace of conscience. The religion of the heathen could never assure us whether God would pardon. The light of nature could never tell us how often God would pardon ; how great sins could be forgiven ; what we must do to be pardoned ; nor show us any merit sufficient to obtain pardon. (b) In the special favour of God. (c.) Pleasure that arises from the regular operation of our powers.
2. Holiness.—It comprises, (1.) An aversion to all sin. (2.) A contempt of the present world in comparison of the future. (3.) A delight in the worship and society of God. (4.) Zeal and activity in his service. (5.) A hearty love to our fellow-creatures, especially the saints.

III. What sort of witness, &c.

1. It dwells more in the heart than in the head. 2. It will in some measure appear in the life. 3. It is a very rational evidence. 4. It is certain and infallible. 5. It is strong and powerful. 6. It does not depend on critical knowledge of Scripture. 7. It is universal to all Christians. 8. It should be always growing and improving.

IV. Some inferences.

1. How glorious is the gospel of our Lord !
2. This inward witness affords an excellent rule for self-amination.

3. It presents the true method of confirming our souls in the faith.
4. It affords strong encouragement to profess Christianity under persecution.
5. It shows the best way to honour the gospel. Let it appear.

DR WATTS.

THE WELL-BELOVED GAIUS.

3 JOHN, ver. 2.—“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”

The minor characters of Scripture often furnish materials for prolonged and salutary reflection. The portraiture implied in the text is brief, but eminently suggestive. Gaius is not a star of the first magnitude, but the light which he yields, the orbit in which he moves, render him worthy of close observation. Nothing more is known of him beyond that which is here recorded, and yet it surpasses the contents of far more elaborate biographies.

I. The character of Gaius.

II. The contrast in his condition.

III. The application.

I. The character of Gaius.—He appears to have had a weak and sickly body, but a vigorous and healthy soul.

1. We are reminded of his reception of the truth: “The truth that is *in* thee.”
2. The external manifestation of his religion: “Thou *walk-est* in the truth.”
3. His Christian fidelity: “Thou doest *faithfully*.”
4. His love to the brethren: “Thy charity before the church.”

II. The contrast in his condition: "Beloved, I wish above all things," &c.—What would be the consequences to us if our bodies and worldly circumstances took the degree of health that our souls assume? Rare is the individual in whom spiritual prosperity is so eminent that it might afford the pattern of all that is desirable for temporal prosperity. A prosperous Christian is a prayerful Christian; a patient Christian, a powerful Christian.

III. Application.

1. The great want of the churches is spiritual prosperity.
2. In order to attain this, we need individual solicitude.
3. All real prosperity must be sought from Divine influence.
4. As believers in Christ, we are anticipating a condition in which soul and body will alike harmonize in undeviating prosperity.

EDITOR.

LOSS OF FIRST LOVE.

REVELATION ii. 4:—"Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

When Christ left the world, in respect of his bodily presence, he left this promise with his disciples: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" and he gave proof that his promise might be depended on: and permitted them to see its performance. When a furious persecutor like Saul of Tarsus was destroying the church, Jesus arrests him on his way: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" When St John was banished to Patmos, and, as it is said by some historians, made a slave in the mines there, had Christ then forgotten his promise? No! We have here its fulfilment, &c.

Consider concerning this decay in religion—

I. Its nature.

II. Its danger.

III. Its symptoms.

IV. Its remedy.

I. The nature of decay in religion.—You are to distinguish here between a church that is decaying and a church that is dead. A church is mentioned in the third chapter that was dead: “Unto the angel of the church in Sardis,” &c. A church may be alive as to its ordinances and doctrines, and yet have “left its first love.” It may hold the truth, it may have the gospel in the form of it, and in the power of it too in a certain degree, and yet what we may call the soul of religion, the spirituality, the zeal, the love, the fervour, which it once had, may be gone. The spirit, the life, the power, the unction is gone; there is a coldness, a comparative indifference, a want of spirituality, a want of tenderness of conscience.

II. The danger of this state.—The most fatal ruins are frequently not those which come suddenly but progressively—by little and little, from step to step. There is not a more fatal disease than consumption, &c. Decay in religion is of this nature; it is a spiritual consumption.

III. What are the signs of this state? 1. When a man leaves his first love, you will find him resting in, and building on his knowledge of divine truths. He is satisfied, perhaps, with a regular walk; keeping the company to which he has been accustomed, and talking the same language which he used to talk, while he is cold as to the design and principle of the Christian walk and conversation. He may contend earnestly for forms and particular opinions of a party,

but he is cold as to growing up into Christ Jesus in all things. 2. He is cold in spiritual, and warm in secular pursuits. 3. He begins to be very susceptible of taking offence. 4. A sign still more awful is when a man can sport with the church's wounds.

IV. The remedy.—This is one part of our remedy—recollection: “I counsel thee to remember.” “To know ourselves diseased is half our cure.” Take the counsel which Jesus gives to another decaying church: “Anoint thine eyes with eye salve,” &c.; and, “As ye first received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.” Christ is our remedy for spiritual decay. In returning to him thou shalt be healed. Let us every one ask, “What does conscience say to this charge?” “Have we left our first love?” How many things there are in the decay of the soul which the most penetrating human eye can never discover. What would it avail if the whole world were to join to acquit me, while Jesus says, “I have somewhat against thee?” Remember, then, this message of Christ, and hear his encouragements as well as his warnings: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

May God, of his infinite mercy, enable every one of us to rise from earth, and to reach that blessed world!

RICHARD CECIL, M.A.

JESUS AT THE DOOR.

REVELATION iii. 20.—“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

There are three things worthy of our attention, in these words:—

I. What Jesus does for the conversion of sinners:
He stands at their door, and knocks.

II. How the sinner ought to respond to the love of Jesus Christ: He ought to hear his voice, and open the door.

III. The promise which Jesus makes to all who open to him: "I will come in," &c.

I. What Jesus does, &c.

1. Consider the affront that is put upon Jesus in refusing him admittance.
2. The injury the sinner suffers, and the blindness of his refusal.
3. The length of time that Jesus waits for sinners.

Jesus Christ knocks at the door of sinners:—

1. By natural calamities.
2. By individual warnings.
- (1.) By convictions of conscience. (2.) By ministry of his Word. (3.) By affliction and bereavement. (4.) By his mercies and favours. (5.) By the ordinances of the New Testament.

II. How the sinner ought, &c.

1. The first effect of the Saviour's voice, Humility.
2. Solitude.
3. Encouragement.
4. Attraction.
5. Consolation.

III. The promise, &c.

Jesus will bring pardon, peace, joy, the sealing of the Spirit, the earnest of the Spirit.

It implies communion with God:—

1. In the contemplation of his attributes.
2. In the exercises of grace.
3. In his various providences.

HENRI CHATELAIN AND JOHN FLAVEL.

THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.

REVELATION xiv. 4. — “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

I. What it is to follow the Lamb *whithersoever he goeth*?

1. In his commandments. 2. In his teaching. 3. In his providences. 4. In his example. Truly without hypocrisy; constantly without apostacy. Speedily, truly, undividedly, zealously, humbly, cheerfully, diligently, constantly, faithfully, transcendently.

II. Why they follow the Lamb?

1. Because they are redeemed by his blood. From the world, the curse, sin, the sting of death, devil, hell—six enemies. There are three things called precious in Scripture: Faith—the promises—the blood of Christ.
2. Because they are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.
3. Because they are risen with the Lamb.
4. Because they are enlightened by the Lamb.
5. Because they love the Lamb.
6. Because they are married to the Lamb.
7. Because they have the spirit of the Lamb.
8. Because all their privileges come from the Lamb.
9. Because their names are written in the Lamb's book of life.
10. Because they shall be for ever with the Lamb.

III. The excellency of following the Lamb.—They have his presence. They shall know his mind. They may come boldly to him. All their wants shall be supplied by him. They shall share with him his divine nature—his conquests—his grace—his glory—his riches. They shall be protected by him.

IV. How they may be known who follow the Lamb. By their character—some marks in this chapter. By their spirit. By their name. By their graces. By their associates. By their language.

W. DYER, 1666.

THE TRIUMPHS OF PATIENCE.

REVELATION xiv. 12.—“Here is the patience of the saints.”

A religious character is an object truly wonderful and interesting; there is something in him worthy of peculiar notice and regard: “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace!” David, indeed, fixes the mind on one article only, and calls upon us to consider his “end.” But his way is as remarkable as his end; his life is as deserving of attention as his death; and it is pleasing and useful to observe him in every relation, to pursue him through every condition, and to admire those excellences which unfold themselves, and operate as proofs of his origin, and as pledges of “the glory and honour, and immortality,” to which he tends.

I. Delineate the character of saints.

II. Explain the connection there is between saints and patience.

III. Specify some cases in which their patience is to be rendered illustrious.

I. Delineate the character.—God has always a people for his name; he owns them to be *saints*—because they are *holy ones*. This title is taken from their *dedication to God*, and from their *personal renovation*.

II. The connection between saints and patience.

1. Saints only have patience.
2. Every saint possesses patience.
3. It highly becomes them to cultivate patience.

III. Some cases in which their patience is to be rendered illustrious.

1. In bearing provocation.—This is required by a Chris-

tian's peace; by his wisdom; by his dignity; and by examples most worthy of imitation.

2. In suffering affliction.
3. Under delays.

W. JAY.

JOY IN GOD'S GOVERNMENT.

REVELATION xix. 6.—“Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

The happiness of nations depends upon the character of their governors, &c.

I. The fact.

II. The sentiment justified.

III. The expression it requires.

I. The fact: “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

1. We are under the moral government of God as a law-giver.
2. We are subjects of God's providential government.
3. It is our happiness to know that the kingdom of God amongst men is mediatorial.

II. The sentiment justified: “Hallelujah,” &c.

1. It is a matter of devout gratitude that we live under the government of a God of grace.
2. That this government is in the hands of Christ.
3. That this kingdom rightfully belongs to him.
4. That the end and object of this government must be identical with the one great object of his atoning work.
5. That we are sure this great King will honour and reward all his followers.

III. The expression to be given to this sentiment.

1. Look out upon events with a calm, if you cannot always with a triumphant eye.
2. Let the fact be greeted with actual thanks.
3. Cultivate a spirit of patient acquiescence, holy cheerfulness, and joy.

ANONYMOUS.

A CITY WITHOUT A TEMPLE.

REVELATION xxi. 22.—“And I saw no temple therein.”

The word “temple” is commonly used in two senses: one, the strict and proper sense of the word; the other more lax and figurative. In the former sense, a temple means a place set apart and consecrated to God, in which priests serve, in which sacrifices are slain, incense is offered, and into whose offices common men may not intrude. Such was the Jewish temple. But if the word temple be understood in that sense, the text is already fulfilled in the New Testament church. These things all pointed to Christ, the great High Priest of our profession—the Lamb of God slain for our sins—the altar that sanctifies both giver and gift—who presents in heaven the incense of his merits and intercession—who brings us and all our services to God, and renders them acceptable. In him the type terminates and is fulfilled. He is priest, victim, altar, temple, all sacred names in one. Indeed, in these respects the gospel church is a nearer resemblance of heaven, more spiritually glorious than Jerusalem of old, &c. But by the word “temple” men more commonly understand any place set apart for the worship of God. In this sense, the text can be only true of heaven. One feature of perfection in our future life will be, that there will be *no place* or house set apart for God. *Place* and *time* are things of great importance to us *here*. In heaven they will be abolished. This involves an inconceivable difference between our present and future condition. An eternal Sabbath—a universal temple, in which there shall be nothing worldly, nothing trivial, no moment not employed in the service of God, no person not a spiritual priest; all alike near and dear to him—all alike privileged. These are things, which, to

look at steadily bewilders the mind, and must convince us that this one sentence comprehends a bliss, an honour, an exaltation, beyond all conception, much more beyond all expression.

I. Two or three general remarks on temples.

II. Illustrate the idea of heaven which these words convey.

I. Remarks on temples.

1. They are a concession to human infirmity.—In their fundamental idea they embody false thoughts of God. They represent him as dwelling in one particular place, &c. If one man enjoys more than another the sense of his love, or more communion with him, this arises not from a more peculiar presence, but from the more spiritual state of the man's own mind, through the operation of Divine grace upon it. There shall be two men in this sanctuary or in any other, one of whom is full of light, life, love, and joy; his next neighbour totally destitute: yet God is here: the difference is not in him, but in the men themselves. And there shall be a third person in no sanctuary, but upon a sick-bed, who shall find that God is with him; while many a person finds no difference between the house of prayer and a market-place. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" "Where is the house that ye build me, and what is the place of my rest?"

2. They are a necessary concession.—Every man needs public means of grace for his own sake, and for the sake of others. We call them *concessions*, to guard against superstition; we call them *necessary* concessions, to guard against neglect. God has acknowledged, adopted, honoured them.

3. They are, and always have been, figurative of something else beyond them.—The Jewish temple was a type of Christ. Christians are themselves temples of God. Necessity of self-consecration—To this we are pointed by sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit—by the nature of our enjoyments—by our relation to Christ.

II. The idea of heaven, &c.

1. There is no temple in heaven, because heaven itself is the temple.
2. Because difference of times will be done away.
3. Because all its employments will be of what we call here a religious character.
4. Because there we shall be no longer dependent upon means and ordinances, but shall be raised above them.

Improvement.

1. This subject sheds light upon the true character of the New Testament Church.
2. It will help to guard us against the two extremes of superstition on one hand, and indifference on the other.
3. It teaches us the necessity and true uses of religious ordinances.
4. It exhibits a decisive test of preparation for heaven.

ANONYMOUS.

CHRIST THE GLORY OF HEAVEN.

REVELATION xxi. 23.—“And the Lamb is the light thereof.”

- I. Jesus Christ is in heaven, the rightful and acknowledged Head of his redeemed people. He is to be the God-Man for ever; and in this character, to reign as the King of saints, the King of Zion, the King of glory. His subjects will be multiplied innumera- bly, they will have perfect repose in their Sovereign.
- II. Christ is himself the author and dispenser of all the blessedness of the heavenly world: “I go to prepare a place for you.” Its *redeemed inhabitants* are all the children of his power and grace. All the sources of *blessedness* are either in him or from him. The *permanency* of heaven is his work.
- III. He is the most happy of all the glorified inhabitants of heaven. To have saved them is his everlasting blessedness.
- IV. He is the object of their adoration and praise.

Application.

1. Learn what are the essential preparatives for the heavenly world. Those which exalt Christ.
2. This subject should urge on the people of God a more heavenly mind and more heavenly anticipations.
3. Labour to enter into that rest.

DR GARDINER SPRING.

NO NIGHT IN HEAVEN.

REVELATION xxi. 25.—“For there shall be no night there.”

Let us take a brief survey of the several evils or inconveniences which attend the night, or the season of darkness here on earth, and show how far the heavenly world is removed, and free from all manner of inconvenience of this kind.

1. Night is a certain sign of weakness and weariness.
2. It is an interruption of labour.
3. Its hours are long and tedious if we wake.
4. Darkness exposes us to danger of losing our way.
5. It is the season of violence and plunder.
6. It is the time of concealment of secret sins.
7. The pleasures of sight vanish and are lost.
8. It is the coldest season.
9. It is a constant periodical emblem of death.

Remarks.

1. When heaven, earth, and hell are compared together with relation to light and darkness, or night and day, we see them in their proper aspects.
2. Whatever kind of light we are made partakers of here, let us use it with thankfulness, zeal, and religious improvement.
3. Let us walk in the light of truth and holiness.
4. Under our darkest nights, let us remember we are travelling to a world of light and joy.

DR WATTS.

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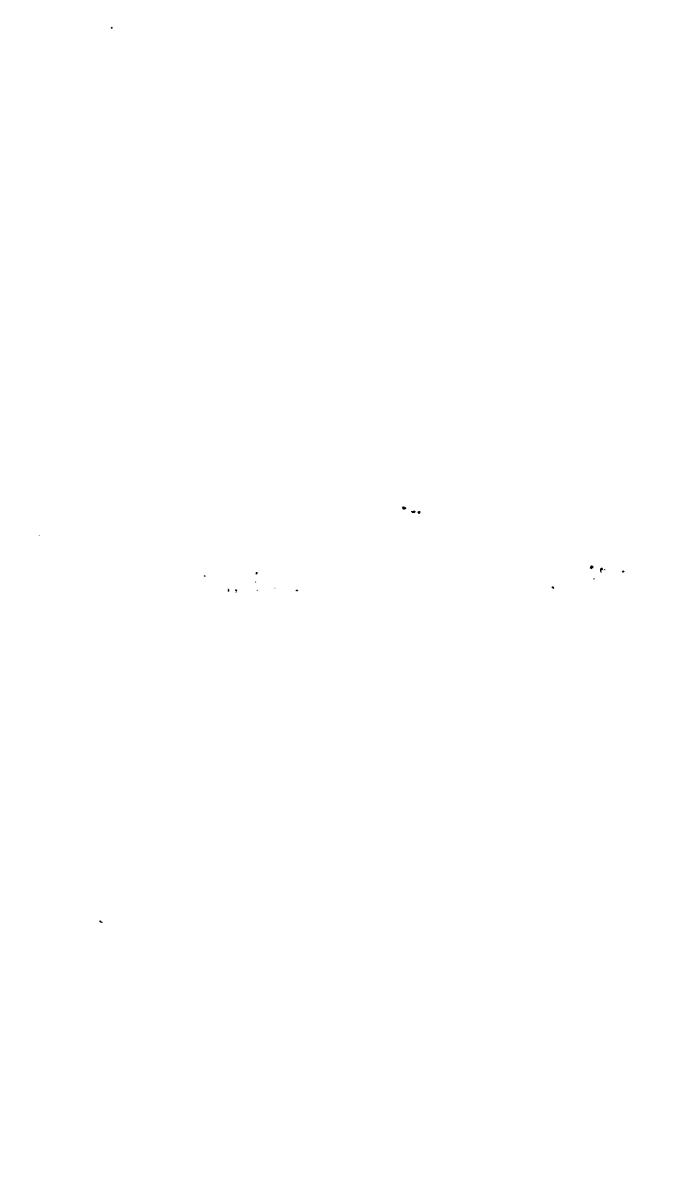
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